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FEBRUARY 2002
NUMBER 120

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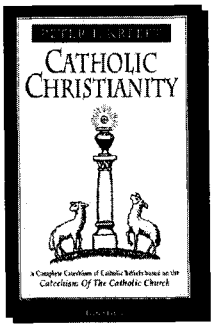

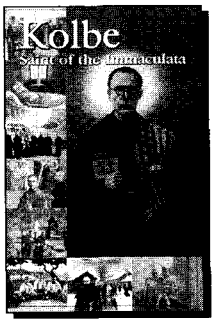

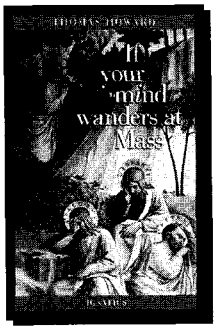

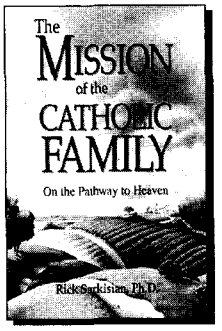

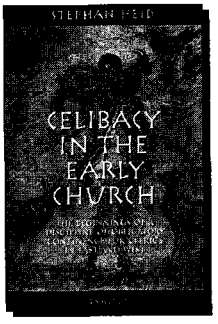

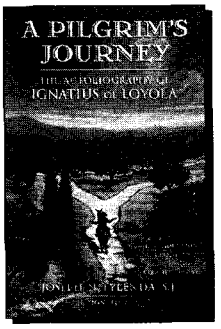

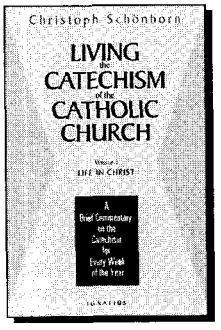

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Correspondence

Darwin's Morality

Benjamin Wiker's attack on me ("Darwin and the Descent of Morality," November 2001) contains many errors. I will point out only a few.

I have argued that a Darwinian science of the "moral sense" as rooted in human nature supports a conservative view of morality as derived from natural law. Thomas Aquinas indicates the biological basis of natural law when he endorses the claim of the Roman jurist Ulpian that "natural right (*ius naturale*) is that which nature has taught all animals."

While I see this as a similarity between Darwin and Aquinas, Professor Wiker asserts that there is no similarity at all because "for Darwin, we don't just share some aspects of our nature with animals. We are ultimately indistinguishable from other animals." Prof. Wiker is wrong, because Darwin clearly states that although human beings share social instincts with other animals, the moral sense that combines social emotions and rational reflection is uniquely human. Indeed, Darwin declares, the moral sense is "the greatest of all distinctions" between human beings and lower animals. But like Aquinas, Darwin thinks this uniquely human morality is rooted in natural inclinations (such as sexual mating and parental care) shared with other animals. Contrary to what Prof. Wiker asserts, Darwin is not a reductionistic materialist who cannot see the moral distinctiveness of human beings.

To make Darwin look like a crude proponent of eugenics, Prof. Wiker selectively quotes Darwin's remarks about how in civilized societies the weak are protected by compassionate practices so that they can survive, and "this must be highly injurious to the race of man." Prof. Wiker does not quote, however, Darwin's remark that such care for the weak manifests the "instinct of sympathy," which is "the noblest part of our nature."

Prof. Wiker claims that Steven Pinker and Richard Dawkins are closer to Darwin's view of morality than I am. This is strange, because both Pinker and Dawkins explicitly reject Darwin's explanation of morality as rooted in human nature. Both are ethical transcendentalists of a Kantian variety who assert that human morality shows the ability of human beings as rational creatures to transcend their nature. Both assert a radical dichotomy between natural facts and moral values. Only human beings, Dawkins believes, have the rational power to cultivate "pure, disinterested altruism," which is "something that has no place in nature, something that has never existed before in the history of the world." By contrast, I defend Darwin's view of the moral sense as rooted in human nature.

I believe that Darwin's ethical naturalism is fully compatible with a theistic view of nature as originally created by God. Prof. Wiker asserts, however, that any notion of God as Creator is incompatible with Darwinian evolution, but he does not explain why this must be so. Doesn't the Bible teach us that God created the universe at the beginning with all of the natural formative powers necessary for developing into the world as we now see it? Doesn't God use the secondary causes of the natural world to execute His original plan? Why couldn't God use the natural secondary causes of evolutionary history to do this?

Is Prof. Wiker implying that God was unable or unwilling to create a fully gifted universe at the beginning that could unfold naturally without any gaps requiring miraculous interventions later? I see no evidence for this in the Bible, unless Wiker is a "young-earth" creationist who inter-

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prets the "six days" of Creation as a literal week of twenty-four-hour days. Like Augustine, I find such a literal reading of Genesis 1 to be absurd.

Larry Arnhart
Department of Political Science
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, Illinois

It is odd to encounter in FIRST THINGS that vulgar rhetorical device—usual favorite of the left—of reviling a historical figure for his once-unexceptional views on race, sex, etc. It can hardly be surprising that Darwin was a racist, given the prevalent views of his contemporaries. To contextualize his racism is, of course, not to excuse it, but it is not impossible to separate his scientific ideas from his prejudices. Holding a contemporary Darwinist liable for Darwin's racism makes about as much sense as asking a modern-day Protestant to answer for Martin Luther's "The Jews and Their Lies."

Charles Darwin's books are not read as Holy Writ by any biologists I know of. One can appreciate his ingenious ideas of modification by descent and natural selection without agreeing with his misapplication of those ideas to humankind. In the passages that Benjamin Wiker quotes, in fact, it is obvious that Darwin is relying not on empirical observations—unless Professor Wiker agrees that there is some empirical basis for believing that the races differ in moral or intellectual capacity—but on the blind prejudice of his time. Rather than impugning the theory of evolution per se, these passages stand as a stark reminder to the scientist to confine his or her theorizing to matters empirical. When Prof. Wiker insists that despite their unpalatability, "Darwin's [racist] conclusions were correctly drawn from his evolutionary principles," he misses the point that without hard data, those principles exist in a vacuum.

Darwin is right, however, to observe that past societies have permitted behaviors that now seem shockingly immoral, such as infanticide. Is Prof. Wiker contending otherwise? Certainly a glance back at the twentieth century—to say nothing of September 11—confirms William Blake's opinion that "Cruelty has a Human Heart / And Jealousy a Human Face." Blake expresses a despair at the human condition that is not hard to square with the Christian idea that humans are mired in sin, unable to escape without the aid of their Redeemer. In this vein, I am stimulated by Edward T. Oakes' writings in these pages ("Original Sin: A Disputation," November 1998; "Wrestling with Original Sin," February 1999) to wonder if there is an important if so far incompletely explored connection between the theory of evolution and the doctrine of original sin.

Charles Murtaugh
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Department of Molecular and
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Cambridge, Massachusetts

Benjamin Wiker replies:

Allow me first to say how pleased I am to have received such well-articulated responses to my article.

Larry Arnhart asserts that, for Darwin, "the moral sense that combines social emotions and rational reflection is uniquely human." Darwin did indeed say that the "moral sense perhaps affords the best and highest distinction between man and the lower animals." (All quotations from Darwin are from his *Descent of Man.*) As Professor Arnhart points out, Darwin argued that the "moral sense" of human beings is composed of two elements: "social emotions" and "rational reflection." If the human moral sense is truly distinctive, then we should be able to see its distinctive character arise in its elements.

In regard to "rational reflection," Darwin argued that "there is no fundamental difference between man and the higher mammals in their mental faculties." Since the mental faculties, as all else, arise through natural selection, "the mental faculties of man and the lower animals do not differ in kind, although immensely in degree."

This "immense difference in degree" might sound promising for Prof. Arnhart's argument, but a closer inspection proves otherwise. The "gap" in mental faculties on the evolutionary spectrum is not caused by some sort of leap of natural selection from the ape to man; rather, Darwin asserts that the "breaks in the series are simply the result of many forms having become extinct." And so, the difference in degree in regard to reason turns out to be merely the *result of the intermediate species having become extinct.* Therefore, human reason, as a distinctly evolved trait, is distinct only *per accidens.*

Even more distressing for Prof. Arnhart's case is that Darwin did not consider reason, as developed in relation to moral sense, to be peculiarly human. For Darwin, "any animal whatever, endowed with well-marked social instincts, would inevitably acquire a moral sense or conscience, as soon as its intellectual powers had become as well developed, or nearly as well developed, as in man."

But couldn't Darwin have meant that any creature thus endowed would develop the *same* moral sense—say, that outlined by St. Thomas in his account of natural law? No. Darwin was quite clear: "I do not wish to maintain that any strictly social animal, if its intellectual faculties were to become as active and as highly developed as in man, would acquire exactly the same moral sense as ours." It is at this point in the argument that Darwin illustrated his assertion by the hypothetical rational hive bees (quoted in full in my original article) who, according to their evolved moral sense, think it a "sacred duty" to commit fratricide and infanticide.

Nor, finally, is "sympathy" distinctively human, but develops in "all those [social] animals which aid

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and defend each other," and "will have been increased, through natural selection."

The social instincts, reason, the moral sense, and sympathy—none are distinctly human, nor does their evolution through natural selection result in a definite, non-changing morality, such as St. Thomas' natural law.

Next, Prof. Arnhart faults me for quoting Darwin's very frank eugenic language, but not quoting Darwin's remarks that sympathy keeps us from destroying the weak, the sickly, and the deformed, even "if so urged by hard reason, without deterioration in the noblest part of our nature." However noble Darwin's sentiments here, there are (at least) the following difficulties with his invocation of sympathy.

First, it contradicts the essentially non-teleological nature of his more fundamental principle of natural selection. On evolutionary grounds, natural selection has no goals, and that includes no moral goals. Yet Darwin, *in contradiction to his own principle*, inserted one, and began waxing poetic about "an advancement in the standard of morality" through an extension of sympathy from the tribe to the nation, then "to the men of all nations and races," and finally "to the lower animals."

Second, since natural selection is *the* fundamental principle, on Darwinian grounds, if sympathy *happens* to develop by natural selection, and the expression of sympathy contradicts the better survival of the group, then so much the worse for sympathy. As the great nineteenth-century zoologist and avid Darwinian Ernst Haeckel asked, "What good does it do to humanity to maintain artificially and rear the thousands of cripples, deaf-mutes, idiots, etc. who are born every year with an hereditary burden of incurable disease?" Haeckel, reaffirming the "hard reason" of natural selection, declared quite frankly: "Sentiment should never be allowed to usurp the place of reason in these weighty ethical questions." Haeckel's conclusions are horrible, but in contrast to Darwin himself, they are consistent with the premises of Darwin's account of the survival of the fittest, and that is why the eugenics movement flowed forth so swiftly after publication of the *Origin*.

Third, the embrace of sympathy as *the* moral principle is opposed to the natural law anyway. Sympathy is rooted in the capacities to feel pleasure or pain, and to recognize them in others. As Darwin points out, the capacities for pleasure, pain, and sympathy are not distinctly human. The difficulties? At least the following two.

In regard to human beings alone, sympathy is a loose cannon on a very large deck. The feeling of sympathy could just as easily bring someone to become an escort at an abortion clinic as it could bring someone to pray outside that same clinic; sympathy could just as surely lead someone to affirm homosexual marriages as to deny them; sympathy could just as quickly lead to the conclusions of the euthanasia movement as to the anti-euthanasia movement. Unlike the natural law, sympathy is morally protean.

Even worse, the elevation of sympathy and its extension to animals means that other animals must be weighed in the moral balance *with* human beings. As Peter Singer rightly reasons (on Darwinian grounds), the adult gorilla's capacity to suffer and to empathize are greater than that of a newborn human, and therefore the adult gorilla morally trumps the human newborn.

As for Pinker and Dawkins, all attempts by "ethical transcendentalism" to escape the inevitable results of natural selection determining morality should tell us quite clearly that "natural facts" as defined by Darwinism do in fact lead to pernicious moral results. Why else would Pinker and Dawkins feel compelled to emigrate from the natural world—the world of Darwinian natural selection—to some alleged noumenal, transcendental world and plant the flag of morality there?

Finally, I am not a young-earth creationist, and I do believe that God uses secondary causes—but just not secondary causes as defined by Darwinian materialism.

Charles Murtaugh asserts that I used a "vulgar rhetorical device" to tar Darwin with racism. Certainly the question at issue is whether Darwin's racism was *intrinsic* to his arguments or *extrinsic*. If intrinsic, then Darwin was rightly tarred; if extrinsic, I treated him unfairly.

To give an example of an *extrinsic* relation, suppose I had written an article on Dmitri Mendeleev, who discovered the logical arrangement of chemistry's Periodic Table of Elements, and my article was chock full of Mendeleev's racial slurs, all of which were taken from his private letters and none of which had anything to do with the structure of the Periodic Table. Then we might conclude both that Mendeleev's racism might be an expression of "once-unexceptional views" and that such racism had nothing to do with his scientific theories.

The case of Darwin is clearly different. The racism is *intrinsic* to his account of natural selection, and that is why it arises in his application of natural selection to human races in the *Descent of Man*. Since, according to Darwin, the races themselves have arisen through natural selection, and further, since both intelligence and moral capacity are variable heritable traits, then (Darwin rightly concludes) different races will have different intellectual and moral capacities. If I were a Darwinist, I could not think otherwise, however unpalatable for current tastes.

But I am not a Darwinist, and I don't believe that the races were caused by natural selection. Indeed, I believe that the presence of equivalent intelligence and moral capacities spread equally among all the races is a proof *against* Darwinism and *for* natural law, for natural selection could

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never have spread such capacities so uniformly. Thus, I am not a racist, because I am not a Darwinist. If a Darwinist is not a racist, then he will have to come up with a very good reason for the remarkable convergence of human intelligence and moral capacity among races so long isolated and evolving.

A Suffering God

In almost every regard Thomas G. Weinandy ("Does God Suffer?" November 2001) has effectively brought to a close a trend in theology that has almost become axiomatic in contemporary theology: that God suffers alongside, and in solidarity with, a suffering humanity. As the author shows, such a theology, far from establishing a solidarity between God and the human race, only represents the triumph of that kind of lachrymose sentimentality that has unleashed such havoc on theology and preaching for at least two centuries now.

However, Father Weinandy has unfortunately ignored one problem lurking within the tradition that must be addressed if the deleterious effects of this trend are to be avoided. At one point in his argument the author avers that as "pure act, God *possesses the potential* to perform acts that are singular to His being pure act" (emphasis added). In other words, although God is pure act, He has at least *this* potential: whether to create or not (otherwise the gratuity of creation is lost).

This dilemma led Gottfried Leibniz into some notorious antinomies. Since God is pure act, he said, and since creation before the moment of creation is mere potentiality, God is thereby *constrained* by His pure actuality to create "the best of all possible worlds" out of the infinite array of possibles facing Him, otherwise He diminishes His pure activity by a less-than-perfect choice. Such a position directly and almost inevitably led to the scathing satire of Voltaire's *Candide* and to the embarrassed position in which theodicy has been immured ever since.

For that reason the question of act and potentiality inside the Godhead needs reexamining, a project that the greatest theologians of the twentieth century have not shirked from undertaking. Again, for that same reason Fr. Weinandy speaks too schematically when he pigeonholes Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar among such lachrymose advocates of a passible God as Jürgen Moltmann and John Macquarrie. Perhaps I should leave the Barthians to defend Barth, but I must say I found it rather disconcerting to find von Balthasar being corralled with such an exotic herd as Roger Haight and Hans Küng. For what von Balthasar has done in his own reflections and proposals on this knotty issue is to take seriously the dilemmas bequeathed by the tradition. Essentially, these dilemmas are handed down to us by the juxtaposition of the classical position against the antinomies that Leibniz exposed when he naïvely characterized creation as the best of all possible worlds. Perhaps the damage Leibniz did was unintentional, but after Voltaire's harsh assistance in bringing these antinomies to light, the issue can no longer be avoided.

Thus, although I agree with most of Fr. Weinandy's article (as well as, a fortiori, with his book of the same title), I must say that the main weakness of both article and book comes from the fact that the author too readily dismissed Barth and Balthasar. No doubt the space of his article forbade an extended treatment of these giants, but his book-length monograph managed to dismiss both these men in a footnote (and in the *same* footnote to boot!). In fact, however, or at least in my opinion, Barth and Balthasar represent a confrontation with the tradition that has to be addressed if Fr. Weinandy is to succeed in challenging, and eventually undermining, the idea of a passible God. (Readers who wish to pursue these issues in Balthasar at a technical level should read G. F. O'Hanlon's *The Immutability of God in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* [Cambridge University Press], and for those who read German there is Thomas Rudolf Krenski's *Passio Caritatis: Trinitarische Passiologie im Werk Hans Urs von Balthasars* [Einsiedeln].)

Edward T. Oakes, S.J.
Regis University
Denver, Colorado

I was shocked to read Thomas G. Weinandy's article and to realize that while having interesting arguments in favor of his thesis and interpretations, he totally ignored the origin of this preoccupation.

He places the origin of the discussion on the passibility of God in very recent time with the Anglican theologians Andrew M. Fairbairn and Bertrand B. Brasnett, and considers that the entire Christian Christological tradition maintained the impassibility of God.

However, Cyril of Alexandria's doctrine on theopaschism is not only well known, but the object of a serious and lasting theological discussion in the fifth century and, later, during the reign of Justinian, engaging the most outstanding theologians of the time.

It is hard for me to understand such an omission in any article that deals with theopaschism.

(The Rev.) Theodor Damian
Romanian Institute of Orthodox
Theology and Spirituality
Woodside, New York

Thomas G. Weinandy replies:
I am pleased that Father Edward T. Oakes, S.J., endorsed, on the whole, my article and book, and that he even believes that I have "effectively brought to a close" a wrong-minded view of God and human suffering. I wish I were as confident about the effectiveness of my book in bringing about such a welcomed end. But his confidence does give me hope!

Nonetheless, Fr. Oakes does fault me for not developing the relation-

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ship between God being "pure act" and the potential that such an understanding affords Him, thus leaving unresolved all the potential problems raised by Gottfried Leibniz. My lack of attention to such an issue may be problematic, as Fr. Oakes insists, but it is not an issue that I was aware of at the time of writing my book, and even if I had been, I would not have treated it. My book is simply not concerned about the issues Fr. Oakes raises. It seems to me that it is a topic for a book that he should write and not a topic for a book that I should have written.

More to the point, Fr. Oakes believes that I should have given, in the light of the issues he raises, more attention to Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar. Again, there is some truth to this. Nonetheless, sorting out Barth and von Balthasar on the impassibilty and passibility of God in relationship to human suffering would entail, again, another major study. (I note where such studies can already be found.) Fr. Oakes should be happy that I at least lumped them together in one, though quite long, footnote. Moreover, returning to Fr. Oakes' original point, neither Barth nor von Balthasar grasp the significance of God being "pure act" and because of that they are, in the end, ambiguous in their own understanding of God's impassibility and passibility, as my long footnote again shows. Von Balthasar states that one must "walk on a knife edge" when attributing properly impassibility and passibility to God, but, in true von Balthasarian fashion, he refuses to articulate exactly what that "knife edge" is. Thus, while he examines in some detail, often quite critically and insightfully, much of the contemporary writing on the subject of a suffering God, one is left frustratingly ambivalent about his own unresolved and so, for the most part, unarticulated position.

As for Fr. Theodor Damian's point, I presume he does not mean that Cyril of Alexandria held, as do many contemporary theologians, that God as God suffered and so is really the first to propose a suffering God in the contemporary sense. He was not a "modern" theopaschite sixteen hundred years ahead of his time. Cyril did insist against Nestorius, and rightly so, that, because of his incarnate state, the Son of God, who is truly God, really did suffer, but he equally insisted that the Son of God did not suffer as God but as man. Nonetheless, within this understanding Cyril was a theopaschite. This I stated in my article as well as in my book. If Fr. Damian means that Cyril, in insisting that it was truly the Son of God who suffered, was the first to treat the issue of theopaschism, this is true in the sense that he provided the most mature expression and resolution to this issue within patristic Christology. However, while all the Fathers, including Cyril, insisted on God's impassibility, the concern for protecting God's impassible nature goes all the way back to at least Ignatius of Antioch (died circa 107 B.C.).

Jesus and the Jews

I read with interest Richard John Neuhaus' exegetical commentary on John's remark that "Salvation is from the Jews" (November 2001). His statement merits great interest and respect. While I lack the skill to appraise Father Neuhaus' deep probing, I was however taken aback by his most unfortunate, indeed offensive, statement that "those Jews for whom 'Never Again' means never enough of Christian self-denigration" will always approach the Jewish-Christian dialogue with a sense of grievance.

As Fr. Neuhaus most assuredly knows, the term "Never Again" has to do with the Holocaust—that never again would Jews go into the abyss without struggle and awareness. Those two words have never, to my knowledge, been used to insist upon Christian self-denigration. I would be curious to know one reference he could cite to make such a statement stick. This does not negate the need of coming together that Fr. Neuhaus wishes to advance. But such crudities do not alleviate inherited suspicions.

Irving Louis Horowitz
Hannah Arendt University
Professor, Emeritus
Rutgers University
New Brunswick, New Jersey

Richard John Neuhaus tends to minimize the differences between Jewish and Christian religious thought, even to the extent that he seems to deny that we are dealing with two distinct religions. Although this is still a minority view, it is nevertheless eagerly pursued by some Christian authors, though utterly rejected by the vast majority of Jewish writers.

Father Neuhaus seems to believe that since Jesus was born into a Jewish family he remained Jewish in thought. This is basically the Nazi principle of "once a Jew, always a Jew." The Nazis did not accept conversion but only genetics. After the war influential Jews adopted this principle and "once a Nazi, always a Nazi" is still regarded as valid by some. I reject this idea because people can see the errors of their previous ways, repent, and become better persons for it thereafter.

Therefore I am also unable to accept the statement that in the Eucharist we consume "Jewish flesh." This thoroughly materialistic concept runs counter, I believe, to Jesus' intent to be remembered for what he did, in the name of the Father, rather than for having been born and raised as a Jew. He saw himself as the fulfillment of Jewish prophecy (therefore salvation is of the Jews, rather than the Samaritans) and as a messenger of universal truth. He openly confronted the hypocrisy of the then ruling classes of the Jewish religion and this is why he was killed. He was neither a Pharisee nor a patriotic Zealot as some authors would now want to have it, because his kingdom was not of this world.

The idea that Christianity still needs Judaism and that it would dis-

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appear if, for some reason or other, Judaism no longer existed also seems flawed. Although this need was present in the first three centuries of our era, the reasoning is no longer valid. On the contrary, one could argue that the persistence of Judaism is actually due to the Christian religion, which kept the Hebrew Bible alive and dispersed it far and wide. The prophet Muhammad also accepted the validity of Hebrew scriptures, and I believe that no one would say today that the Muslim religion would disappear if some Arabs succeeded in eliminating Jews the world over.

Ernst Rodin, M.D.
Sandy, Utah

Richard John Neuhaus makes a valuable contribution to the Jewish-Christian dialogue with his article "Salvation Is from the Jews." His rejection of traditional Christian supersessionism is refreshing, as is his willingness to tackle head-on the difficult issue of witness. To believe, as so many do, that genuine dialogue can occur without honest discussion of theological differences is patently absurd. Father Neuhaus rightly points out we are "locked in argument by which conscience is formed, witness is honed, and friendship is deepened."

Yet there is one glaring omission from his article and from the Jewish-Christian dialogue in general. In Romans 11:5 Paul comments, "Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace." Paul is making reference to those who, like himself, were Jewish believers in Jesus. That remnant is alive and well at this present time too, though often ignored by the Church and despised by Jewish community leaders. There are tens of thousands of Jews here in the United States and all around the world who embrace Jesus as their Messiah and continue to live as Jews. We are a growing number who long for a place at the table. I once pleaded with a friend who is a Christian leader in the dialogue to include Jewish believers in Jesus in his plans for an upcoming meeting. He told me, "David, Jewish Christians add more heat than light to the discussion."

How sad. I contend that by ignoring us both sides are happily avoiding the crux of the theological debate, thereby obviating the genuineness of the dialogue. If it is true, as Fr. Neuhaus says, that there is no plural to the people of God, why insist on excluding us? Jewish believers in Jesus stand as a bridge community between the two faith traditions. Why insist on yelling across that valley to one another when you can walk across the bridge to meet in the middle? That would make for an interesting dialogue indeed.

David Brickner
Executive Director
Jews for Jesus
San Francisco, California

RJN replies:
I regret that Irving Louis Horowitz was offended. The reference was to a statement, several times cited in these pages, by a rabbi friend who said that some Jews now have two controlling mottoes, "Never Again" and "Never Enough," the latter referring to the insatiable demand for Christian apologies. I agree with Professor Horowitz that the conflation of the Holocaust with any real or imagined slight against Jewish sensibilities is deeply offensive—to Christians as well as Jews.

As to who is a Jew, Ernst Rodin's disagreement is with the position taken by almost all, if not all, Jewish authorities. Another word for "materialistic" is incarnational. Finally, the reasons why Christianity needs Judaism were, I believe, spelled out in the article.

David Brickner is correct in pointing out the small but important phenomenon of Messianic Judaism, but that would be the subject of another article. "Salvation Is from the Jews" dealt with Jews who are certain that they are not Christians.

Kant and Christian Politics

Thank you for publishing Damon Linker's review of my book *Christian Faith and Modern Democracy* (November 2001). It presents an insightful analysis of my argument and clearly indicates what is most controversial in the book—namely, my criticism of the prevailing view that Christianity necessarily requires liberal democracy as the only form of government consistent with its conception of human dignity.

While Mr. Linker seems to share some of my reservations about the prevailing view, he disagrees sharply with my explanation of what caused the Christian tradition to change from its long-standing support for kingship, theocracy, and hierarchical institutions and to gradually embrace liberal democracy over the last several centuries. I cite several causes of change—including the Protestant Reformation and the totalitarian experience of the twentieth century—but I give most attention to the influence of Kant's philosophy of freedom on Christian theology.

Mr. Linker finds my emphasis on Kant a bit odd, and his initial reaction is understandable. I seem to be exaggerating the influence of one German philosopher whom many Christians have never heard of or read. At one point, I even seem to be saying, in Mr. Linker's words, that the Catholic Church "has been taken over by Kantians."

Actually, I *am* saying something like that. I argue that the social teaching of most Christian churches today comes from a theology called Christian "personalism" which upholds a notion of the human person as a spiritual and social being who is also a bearer of inalienable human rights. Many Christians today also understand Christian charity as a duty to respect the rights of others and to treat them as "persons" or ends in themselves rather than as "things" or means to profit or pleasure. These ideas are more readily traced to Kantian ethics than to de-

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velopments in Thomistic natural law or to medieval canon law, as scholars such as John Finnis and Brian Tierney have argued.

Moreover, many modern Christian theologians explicitly acknowledge their debt to Kant in their writings. Pope John Paul II says in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* that his development of "the personalistic principle . . . is an attempt to translate the commandment of love into . . . Kantian ethics . . . [though] Kant did not fully interpret the commandment of love." Among Protestants, I cite *The Theology of the Social Gospel* by Walter Rauschenbusch as an explicit attempt to equate the biblical kingdom of God with Kant's vision of perpetual peace and the kingdom of ends. I also cite Dr. Martin Luther King's famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail" as an appeal to a higher moral law that combines natural law with a command to treat human beings as "persons" rather than as "things."

My main point is that modern Christianity has been influenced by Kant directly as well as indirectly in the whole climate of opinion created by modern liberalism, which is today essentially neo-Kantian in grounding human rights in the dignity of persons as rational and moral agents and in viewing democracy as the sole legitimate form of government. To highlight the new consensus in Christian politics, I venture the sweeping generalization that Christian theology has gone through three major periods of development, each influenced by a great philosopher: 1) the Platonic or Neoplatonic Christianity of the early Church Fathers; 2) the Aristotelian Christianity of the Middle Ages; and 3) the Kantian or neo-Kantian Christianity of the modern period.

If this generalization is not plausible to Mr. Linker or to other scholars, then I would like to hear their explanations for the dramatic changes in Christian attitudes toward democracy and human rights and for the precise formulations that Christians now employ in speaking about justice. (It is all about "dignity," "worth," "respect," and "the rights of persons" rather than "law," "virtue," "the common good," and the "hierarchy of ends.") If this generalization about Kant's influence is plausible, as I think it is, then the crucial question is whether modern Christians have been wise to incorporate so much of Kant's philosophy of freedom into Christian theology.

While the best modern theologians are very careful about controlling Kant so that his notion of autonomy does not replace the commands of divine law and natural law, I wonder if the whole strategy is workable or if it is not the cause of our present confusion. Do modern Christians truly understand that freedom must serve an objective hierarchy of ends in order to be legitimate, or do they basically equate freedom with the formation of a personal identity that reflects one's individual conscience? In most cases, they favor personal identity and the right to be one's authentic self. To avoid this confusion, I propose a recovery of Augustinian Christianity as an alternative to Kantian Christianity, and I attempt to develop a prudential approach to politics in place of the moral imperatives of human rights and "the gospel of democracy."

Robert P. Kraynak
Department of Political Science
Colgate University
Hamilton, New York

Damon Linker replies:

Robert P. Kraynak's letter, no less than his book, raises important questions. Specifically, he asks: Has the Church been taken over by Kantians? And if so, is this a bad thing? Professor Kraynak answers both of these questions in the affirmative. I, however, am less certain.

In my review, I did not deny that ideas derived from Kant have exercised an influence on the Church. On the contrary, I believe they clearly have. What I object to is the sweeping way in which Prof. Kraynak portrays that influence. The story is, I would argue, considerably more complicated.

There is no doubt that the great majority of Catholic theologians and intellectuals writing today speak a language of personalism that ultimately derives from Kant. But have they thereby committed themselves to a philosophical position that can justifiably be described as Kantian? I think not. No serious theologian accepts, for instance, Kant's notion that God is a postulate that the human subject posits in order to satisfy the needs of his practical reason. Contrary to what Prof. Kraynak implies when he writes of the need to "control" Kant, accepting a handful of a philosopher's ideas does not necessitate that one accept them all. That many theologians today speak of "persons," "rights," "dignity," and "respect" does not imply that they are Kantians any more than John Paul II's fondness for phenomenology makes him a Heideggerian.

But Prof. Kraynak ultimately means to make a much broader claim—namely, that Kant has exercised an even greater "indirect" influence on the Church through the "whole climate of opinion created by modern liberalism, which is today essentially neo-Kantian." Here, it seems to me, Prof. Kraynak is led astray by a pair of highly questionable assumptions that distort the true character of social life within liberal democracies. First, following Aristotle's analysis of the ancient polis, he assumes that a political regime (in this case, modern liberalism) has the power to stamp the "whole climate of opinion" within a deeply pluralistic nation like the United States. Second, and even more contentiously, he assumes that the regime of modern liberalism is thoroughly Kantian in character. It is these two assumptions that enable him to conclude that, in effect, we're all Kantians now.

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This is not the place to evaluate the adequacy of using Aristotelian regime analysis to understand a modern commercial republic. Suffice it to say that in such political systems, unlike the ancient polis, numerous nonpolitical influences compete with politics to produce the "climate of opinion" that reigns within them. It is therefore at least arguable that the political regime no longer acts as the primary causal variable in explaining human life, if it ever did.

As to whether our regime is thoroughly Kantian, I can only say that to make such an assertion is to push the case for the influence of academic political theory—and one school of political theory in particular—very far. I would propose, instead, that we understand the political principles that order our public life to be the product of (to quote from my review) "a complex combination of philosophic intentions with religious, political, social, and scientific ideas and events beyond the control of any one man or group of philosophers."

When it comes to the question of whether the influence of personalism—with its emphasis on dignity, rights, and democracy—has been bad for the Church, I must venture a tentative No. Can democracy be taken too far? Can it become an end in itself, transgressing the political sphere to refashion social and even religious relationships in its own image? Absolutely. And when it does, it needs to be put back in its place using just the sort of arguments that Prof. Kraynak so skillfully wields in his book. But at the same time, we should not allow ourselves to forget that aristocracy is subject to the same overweening tendencies.

The danger of Prof. Kraynak's critique of personalism is that it will generate nostalgia for premodern forms of social life and modes of theological reflection that had grave problems of their own—problems for which modern ways of living and thinking, however flawed, are a necessary corrective. I thus conclude, as I did in my review, by invoking Tocqueville, who suggested that democracy has triumphed in the modern world, not because it is the telos of human history, and not because it is the only legitimate form of government, but rather because it is more just than the aristocratic order that preceded it. The Church cannot be harmed by placing itself in greater harmony with justice.

Is Natural Law Universal?

Richard John Neuhaus takes me to task (While We're At It, November 2001) for some remarks I offered at a colloquium sponsored by *Commonweal*. While I presented a formal paper on that occasion, the remarks to which Father Neuhaus takes exception represent impromptu oral comments and lack the kind of elaboration and supporting evidence that a writer can provide. I hope that the following will clarify the issue I tried to raise.

When I spoke of Catholics "reasoning within the premises of their own community," I had in mind an excellent piece by David Novak chronicling his intellectual encounter with John Courtney Murray. Novak quotes Murray as declaring:

"It is sometimes said that one cannot accept the doctrine of natural law unless one has antecedently accepted 'its Roman Catholic presuppositions.' This, of course, is quite wrong. The doctrine of natural law has no Roman Catholic presuppositions. Its only presupposition is threefold: that man is intelligent; that reality is intelligible; and that reality, as grasped by intelligence, imposes on the will the obligation that it be obeyed in its demands for action or abstention."

While inspired by Murray's vision, Novak offers a searching metaphysical and theological critique of Murray's argument. He concludes that the specifics of Murray's position do not meet Murray's universalistic aspirations. To quote Novak: "The Thomistic version of natural law as presented by a theologian like Murray cannot have enough plausibility to be convincing in a social discourse outside the Catholic world in which it has been traditionally developed." If I am an "exclusionary liberal," so is Novak.

If Novak is right about Murray (and his argument is strong), there would seem to be two possibilities: 1) every form of natural law argument, like Murray's, rests on presuppositions that command assent within specific communities but not across communal bounds; 2) there is at least one form of natural law that is truly universal in a way that Murray's is not.

Novak argues for the latter alternative. If he is right, the question then becomes, What are the grounds and the content of the natural law that can make good its claims to universality? Is Fr. Neuhaus comfortable with the (Noahidic) version of natural law, rooted in the Jewish tradition, to which Novak ascribes universal standing? And does that version of natural law lead to the specific conclusions about social ethics that Fr. Neuhaus would urge on our society?

William A. Galston
Institute for Philosophy and
Public Policy
University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland

RJN replies:
Yes and yes. Although I am not persuaded that Novak's version of natural law conflicts with Murray's as much as Galston—and Novak—suggest.

Jesus' Difficult Words

Regarding Richard John Neuhaus' "Hard Sayings" (Public Square, November 2001), I would generally agree that Jesus' hard sayings are too often soft-boiled and served up so one doesn't have to chew. But on the specific saying ("If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he

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cannot be my disciple"), I think the difficulty caused by the word "hate" is entirely due to translation of Jesus' original Hebrew (or Aramaic) teaching.

Jesus, in all likelihood, taught in Aramaic or Hebrew. His sayings were transmitted faithfully but ultimately translated into Greek—and at that point some of the sayings only appeared to become mysterious or hard. As the late scholar David Flusser points out in his book *Jesus* (1998): "[This] is one more pertinent saying that does not sound so inhuman in Hebrew as in translation. In Hebrew the verbs 'hate and love' can be juxtaposed to suggest preference (e.g., Genesis 29:31). The Apostle Paul was also familiar with this idiomatic usage, 'As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" (Romans 9:13, Malachi 1:2-3).'"

Flusser's goal was not necessarily to soften, but to clarify. In fact, two of his students, David Bivin and Roy Blizzard, have produced a book entitled *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus: New Insights From a Hebraic Perspective.* I'm sure your readers would find it informative.

Todd E. Voss
Downers Grove, Illinois

Richard John Neuhaus is, of course, correct to caution us against softening the hard sayings of Jesus. Commenting on his homily on the subject, he writes: "Finally I did not 'explain' the words of Jesus; I don't know why he said these deeply disturbing words. Perhaps to deeply disturb. In any event, I am sure they are meant to be taken very seriously indeed—as in what most people mean by literally."

Yet as Martin H. Franzmann, a professor we both had at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, was wont to say about sin and self-mutilation in Matthew 5:29-30: "There is no order of 'One-Eyed' or 'One-Armed' Saints in the Church." And the last time I saw Father Neuhaus, he still had both eyes, both hands, and both feet.

Franzmann comments on the Matthew passage as follows: "Jesus is demanding something more persistent and therefore more agonizing than physical mutilation" (*Follow Me,* Concordia, 1961). Following Franzmann's lead, I suggest that we avoid the temptation to soften Jesus' hard sayings not by taking them literally, as Fr. Neuhaus suggests, but by interpreting them as being "more than literal."

(The Rev.) Philip J. Secker
Hope Lutheran Church
Storrs, Connecticut

I am grateful for Richard John Neuhaus' comments in the November 2001 issue on Jesus' "hard saying" in Luke 14 about hating one's parents, siblings, et al. In fact, I recently heard a sermon in which a priest, sounding a bit embarrassed, attempted to explain away these words in just the way Father Neuhaus described, and then moved on in his sermon to something else.

While I am strongly pro-family, I think that these hard words of Jesus can be heard today as rejecting a phenomenon that still plagues many middle- and upper-middle-class parishes: a pattern of church life that works to exclude those who do not have, or have not had, two children in Sunday School and a spouse sharing the pew. A church that thinks it is merely "family-oriented" can unwittingly practice something more akin to family-olatry. A surprisingly small number of mainline congregations, for example, sponsor clubs or gatherings for their singles who are over the age of thirty.

Jesus' words jolt us into keeping our faith and families theocentric, not familiocentric, and thereby help families themselves to live more abundantly as they risk widening the circle of their loving regard.

David Hein
Professor of Religion and Philosophy
Hood College
Frederick, Maryland

Prejudicial Behavior

Richard John Neuhaus quotes approvingly Pastor Ronald Marshall's clear and careful statements about homosexuality (While We're At It, November 2001), ending with the question "What about that don't you understand?"

Yet it seems questionable that Father Neuhaus understands it when two pages later he makes no distinction between orientation and behavior in his approval of the Boy Scouts of America. Pr. Marshall carefully describes behavior throughout. The Boy Scouts require no infraction in behavior in their exclusion of homosexual persons. They are committed to exclude Scouts and Scout leaders for being truthful about homosexual orientation, and this when they do not exclude recovering alcoholics, heterosexuals struggling with lust, or any other disordered condition not showing itself in sinful behavior. "On my honor I will do my best to . . . keep myself morally straight" is a commitment of the Scout Oath made by all Scouts and Scout leaders. Do these words mean something? Is it not sufficient to hold behavior accountable to them?

Since when is "the mainstream" a test for righteousness? The Scouts may well succeed in their prejudicial behavior, but it directly contradicts the teaching of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* paragraph 2358, "Every sign of unjust discrimination in [homosexuals'] regard should be avoided." Fr. Neuhaus' statement about the "right of the Boy Scouts to exclude leaders who, on the basis of their public statements and actions, raise a question about their possible interest in doing rude things with little boys" approves dispensing with due process and assuming guilt based on "raised questions about possible interest." So much for justice.

The presumption of the guilt of homosexual behavior or anything else on the part of homosexual men and women is on its face unjust prej-

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udice and a slap at those brothers and sisters who struggle valiantly and successfully to "unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they encounter from their condition" (*CCC* 2358). The Church teaches that such people "can and should . . . approach Christian perfection" (*CCC* 2359). The Boy Scouts prejudge them to be incapable of self-mastery.

(The Rev.) Joseph Rinderknecht
(Eagle Scout)
The Lutheran Church of the Covenant
Maple Heights, Ohio

A Theory on the Priest Shortage

Re: While We're At It, November 2001, concerning the shortage of younger priests and pastors.

Our pastor made the following observation about a Roman Catholic church that he plays the organ at every Sunday: aside from the priest, all of the people assisting at the altar are women. Thus, assisting the priest is seen, by the young men of the parish, as woman's work (or at the very least, as something which isn't distinctly, or even predominantly, man's work). And as long as assisting the priest is seen as predominantly woman's work, young men won't be too interested in doing it. And that misses an opportunity to introduce young men to the priesthood.

People can criticize such thinking as "sexist," but that doesn't mean it's not true.

Don Hansen
Upland, California

A Clarification

Daniel Callahan suggests (Correspondence, December 2001) that in my review of Wesley J. Smith's *Culture of Death* (August/September 2001) I unfairly accused him of taking an antireligious position on issues related to bioethics.

I had no intention of implying that Dr. Callahan endorses the trend he described—nor, I think, did Wesley Smith in the passage I cited from his book. I apologize if I created any impression to the contrary. I thought it was worth noting that this deficiency in much modern bioethics has been acknowledged by a respected expert in the field itself.

Richard Doerflinger
Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
Washington, D.C.

Correction

In a letter to the editor in the December 2001 issue, Daniel J. Cassidy was identified as an employee of the Children's Scholarship Fund. He is in fact President of the New Jersey Scholarship Fund. We regret the error.

In a Time of War: An Exchange

In their editorial "In a Time of War" (December 2001), the Editors of FIRST THINGS declare: "One matter that has been muddied in recent decades should now be clarified: those who in principle oppose the use of military force have no legitimate part in the discussion about how military force should be used." Silenced. I have been silenced and I find it tempting to accept being silenced. September 11, 2001 and its aftermath have filled me with a saddened silence. Every thought I have about that terrible day seems to suggest a certainty I do not possess.

However, the FIRST THINGS editorial has made it impossible for me to remain silent. The gross and distorted characterization of pacifism, as well as the defense of the American response to September 11, requires a response. Given my identification with FIRST THINGS, for me to remain silent cannot help but suggest I accept the position taken in "In a Time of War," when the exact opposite is the case.

I find it almost beyond belief that the Editors resort to the Niebuhrian distinction between nonviolent resistance and non-resistance in order to silence the pacifist voice. Of course, they may respond that they say pacifists only have to be silent about the use of military force. But that presupposes that a strong distinction can be drawn between politics and war—a distinction that would force pacifists into the kind of gnosticism they condemn. Indeed, the suggestion that nonviolence is, like celibacy and poverty, a form of monasticism is meant to rob Christian nonviolence of any political significance. I believe there are significant similarities between nonviolence, celibacy, and poverty, but I do not think those similarities mean that those who embody them must lose their moral and political voice. I feel sure that the Editors would not underwrite the oft-made complaint that celibate priests have nothing to say about marriage.

John Howard Yoder spent a lifetime trying to convince Mennonites that they should not accept the Niebuhrian "compliment"—i.e., absolute pacifists are to be admired as long as they acknowledge that they are politically irresponsible. In essay after essay and book after book, Yoder patiently developed a Christolog-

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ical account of Christian nonviolence that refused the Niebuhrian distinction—a distinction that has no exegetical basis—between nonviolent resistance and non-resistance. Yoder's title, *The Politics of Jesus*, is a refusal of the Niebuhrian attempt to make Jesus' "ethic" nonpolitical. In the Epilogue to Paul Ramsey's *Speak Up for Just War and Pacifism*, I challenged Ramsey's contention that Niebuhr's distinction was simply a given needing no justification.

Of course, the Editors may respond that they are unpersuaded by Yoder's criticism of the Niebuhrian distinction, but at the very least they owe us some account of why they are unpersuaded. They may respond that you can only do so much in an editorial, but if a pacifist so crudely characterized just war theories, I suspect the Editors would object. In *Nevertheless* Yoder distinguished nineteen different forms of pacifism. In *When War Is Unjust* Yoder provided one of the most thorough analyses of the varieties of just war reflection we have. One might at least hope that advocates of just war, even in an editorial, might return the favor by acknowledging that their account of pacifism is contested.

Moreover, the Editors owe us an account of how they can use Niebuhr's distinction between nonviolent resistance and non-resistance without also accepting Niebuhr's Christology (or lack of a Christology) as well as his understanding of politics. Niebuhr was quite clear: Jesus was an advocate of non-resistance. That is why Christians must leave Jesus behind when they come to the political realm. They must do so because politics names the order of disguised violence. The most one seeks in the realm of politics is the most equitable balance of power. At best Jesus' ethic of love stands as a judgment on every accomplishment of justice. But any attempt to realize the disinterested love symbolized by the cross in politics indulges in utopianism that only makes politics more violent.

For the Editors to relegate these serious Christological issues to the fatuous question, "What would Jesus do?" is either stupid or dishonest. They know well that the pacifism I and John Howard Yoder represent is at least as critical of liberal pacifism as was Niebuhr. They know, moreover, that the real question is not, "What would Jesus have us do?" The real question is how we should live given what God has done through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I do not believe that pacifist and just war advocates must necessarily answer that question differently. Christian advocates of nonviolence and of just war believe that through the cross and resurrection we have been given the time, the patience, faithfully to follow Christ by refusing to use violent means in the name of a good cause.

Indeed I hope that advocates of just war are as offended by the characterization of just war in "In a Time of War" as I am at the Editors' understanding of pacifism. The Editors seem to assume that some neorealist account of international conflict is compatible with the just war position. Whether that is the case is at least open to serious doubt. In his *The Just War,* Ramsey struggled to show that his account of just war was not only compatible with but presumed a world described by Niebuhr's realist account of the politics between nations. I think there are serious reasons to think Ramsey was not successful. But at least Ramsey struggled. The Editors of FIRST THINGS, captured as they are by their enthusiasm for destroying what they consider an unambiguous evil, are sublimely untroubled.

For example, the Editors acknowledge that the U.S. may have to make alliances with "repugnant tyrannies," but do not explain why that does not entail a form of consequentialism they normally find "repugnant." They say that war is hell, that some injustices may happen, but for some reason that does not force them to consider whether the description of this war as just needs to be called into question. (For a war to be just do all the criteria need to be met?) Rather, it seems, all we need to do is make sure we know that if such acts occur, they be acknowledged as wrong. The Editors also suggest that the Bush Administration will at some time in the future need to say what the purpose of the war is, as well as what constitutes a "terminal point." But if a war is to be just, the purpose—which is necessary so your enemy will know the conditions for surrender—must be stated at the beginning. Asking the Taliban to turn over Osama bin Laden comes close to naming such a purpose. A war on terrorism does not.

I fear the Editors continue a habit they demonstrated in their support of the Gulf War. They assume the just war criteria are a checklist for evaluating whether a conflict can be described as just. But as Ramsey insisted, just war is not a set of rules to be applied, but an institutionalized set of practices to determine whether a conflict is appropriately described as war. A conflict that is not just must be described in some other way than with the honorific description, war. At the very least the Editors owe us an account of when we might have to contemplate surrendering because a conflict could not be fought justly.

Any answer to this challenge must begin by identifying who the "we" is who would be making such a judgment. I fear the "we" of "In a Time of War" is the American "we." The Editors quote President Bush's statement that "the inescapable fact is that they are *our* enemies" with approval. Indeed they even suggest that anyone who might question the Christian and American "we" is a "gnostic" seeking to flee time and space. The refusal to recognize that Christians are Americans, they imply, is an attempt to avoid our duty. Of course they quote the *Letter to Diognetus* to suggest appropriate humility in ever getting right what Christians owe to Caesar, but they fail to indicate any

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concrete political position Christians must take that would give expression to such humility.

I simply cannot comprehend the Editors' celebration of the new patriotism occasioned by September 11. Even if they think the bombing strategy in Afghanistan respects the just war commitment to begin with the least violent response, surely it is the case that the appropriate mood of the American people should be remorse. What a horror it would be if the nation is morally to be renewed by war. Surely a nation capable of fighting a just war must be one that does not need to find its moral substance through war. Is the American response to September 11 a confirmation of Hegel's suggestion that bourgeois states periodically need to be renewed through war?

It is hard not to respond to September 11 without using the event to confirm one's prior judgments about what is wrong or right about America or, more globally, "the world." I continue to worry that those who have criticized the war, and I count myself among them, have engaged in responses meant to confirm our views held prior to September 11 about what is wrong with America. No doubt much criticism or praise of American foreign policy that provides a context meant to help us understand "what happened" can be helpful. Yet I think it wise to refrain from "explaining" what happened. We are too close. To suggest as the Editors do that we are facing the beginning skirmishes in a war of civilizations is to say more than we know. That is particularly the case when they accept the liberal story of the wars of religion as the legitimating narrative for the nation-state. There is, moreover, a certain irony in the Editors' use of September 11 to attack multiculturalism and the way of life associated with that "style of life" just to the extent that the "terrorists" share those judgments.

My criticism of the "we" of "In a Time of War" will be dismissed as but another example of my anti-Constantinian rant. I am quite willing to acknowledge that "In a Time of War" is as clear an example as I could wish of the kind of Constantinianism I have often criticized. But I am quite aware that Constantinianism comes in many shapes and sizes, some with which I have great sympathy. The issue, as has often been pointed out to me in defense of Constantinianism, is whether Christian support of the neighbor compromises the Church. At the very least, "In a Time of War" fails to suggest how the Church can maintain its independence. After all, the rebirth of "religion" in public life is not in and of itself a "good thing"—at least it is not a good thing if you have learned to distrust the apologetic strategies of Protestant liberalism.

Which finally brings me back to the silence that continues to envelop my life after September 11, 2001. September 11 has made it clear to me that this "nonviolent thing" is not just another idea. I feel much like the uneducated fundamentalist Mississippi preacher who, not knowing any better, accepted African Americans into his church. Beaten by the Klan, he confessed to a friend that he had learned there was a lot more to the "race thing" than just race. I am being taught that there is much more to this nonviolent thing than just nonviolence. My life may be changed. Should I, for example, continue to be identified as a member of the Editorial Board of FIRST THINGS? If "In a Time of War" constitutes the perspective of this magazine, should the Editors continue to list me as a member of the board? Surely the position taken in "In a Time of War" comes close to implying that the pacifist refusal to respond violently to injustice makes us complicit with evil and injustice and, therefore, immoral.

These are serious matters that are not just about a magazine, but about friendship. One of the reasons for my silence is the realization that my commitment to Christian nonviolence at this time cannot help but change and perhaps even end friendships. I need all the friends I can get. I have many friends who have criticized me for being associated with FIRST THINGS. I am obviously not a neoconservative. I am not even a theo-conservative. I have, however, supported FIRST THINGS because I believe the magazine has been a venue for some of the best theological journalism available. We are in Richard John Neuhaus' debt for all he has done to make FIRST THINGS and the seminars associated with the Institute on Religion and Public Life a reality. Moreover, anyone who has attended the board meetings of FIRST THINGS knows that the Editors of the magazine are generous in their willingness to entertain positions not their own. But that is exactly why I am not sure how I should understand my relation to FIRST THINGS after "In a Time of War."

The editorial makes clear that the Editors regard the Christian nonviolence I represent as at best "a reminder" to those who are about "being responsible." I may be tolerated because of my theological commitments, but my pacifism can only be regarded as an aberration that is best ignored. The arguments Yoder and I have made in an attempt to show how Christian orthodoxy and nonviolence are constitutive of one another are quite simply not taken seriously by the Editors OF FIRST THINGS. Or at least they are not taken seriously if "In a Time of War" indicates the best thinking of the Editors of FIRST THINGS. I did not expect nor do I expect the Editors to take a pacifist stance, but I confess that their lack of any sadness that should accompany the use of violence fills me with sadness.

I have been honored to be claimed as a friend by many associated with FIRST THINGS. I do not desire to lose such friendship. But "In a Time of War" raises fundamental issues that cannot be ignored. I have no use—nor do I think my friends at FIRST THINGS have any use—for superficial friendships. "We are in deep dis-

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agreements but we are still friends" is a possibility, but may also be an invitation for confusing "friendliness" with friendship. If friendship is an agreement in judgments, then there are clearly times when friends cannot and should not remain friends. I do not yet know if "In a Time of War" constitutes such a time, but I cannot exclude the possibility that this may well be the case. That possibility fills me with sadness . . . and silence.

Stanley Hauerwas
Duke University
Durham, North Carolina

The Editors reply:

Stanley Hauerwas has for many years been a cherished friend and colleague, and we sincerely hope that will continue to be the case. Before responding to some of the many objections he raises, we should note that there is slight chance of his being silenced. He is the author of dozens of books, and articles beyond numbering; interviews with him and discussions about him appear in numerous academic and popular publications, making him probably the most prominent theologian in the country. In its September 17 issue, which may have gone to press before September 11, the editors of *Time* magazine dubbed him "America's Best Theologian." (Without denying the accolade, one wonders how the editors of *Time* would know.)

As to the specific point on which he believes we have silenced him, we can only ask, Why would a person who in principle believes that it is always wrong to use military force even *want* to have a public say in how military force should be used?

A number of other items, more or less in order: monasticism is hardly without "political significance." As Professor Hauerwas has frequently insisted, sometimes the most significant political act is simply to bear witness.

It is true that his arguments for pacifism, and those of John Howard Yoder and others, have not persuaded us. He should be more open to the possibility that arguments may be rejected not because they are not taken seriously but because they are taken seriously and found unconvincing.

His presentation of Reinhold Niebuhr's position strikes us as somewhat unfair, but Prof. Hauerwas has long known from his years of participation in the Institute's Ramsey Colloquium that we find the late Paul Ramsey's argument regarding just war and pacifism very persuasive. This is no new disagreement. What is new is a war requiring hard moral judgments.

We agree that the question, "What Would Jesus Do?" is fatuous, and said so in the editorial. Nor do we see that the alternative question that we proposed is substantively different from that proposed by Prof. Hauerwas. The question for the Christian is faithfulness to Christ.

Prof. Hauerwas says faithful Christians refuse "to use violent means in the name of a good cause." The crucial distinction here is between violence and the use of force in the service of justice. Violence is the disordered use of physical force that injures, abuses, and destroys. The use of military force in a just war, such as this one, is ordered to the defense of the innocent and the securing of justice. Violence is inherently disordered—meaning it is random or capricious, or ordered to an evil end. Force is a sometimes necessary means ordered to a good end. The use of such force is the prerogative and duty of legitimate public authority and is clearly distinct from the individual use of force for private purposes, especially if those purposes include revenge or other malicious intent. In the latter instance, force is violence, and faithful Christians must never resort to violence.

Prof. Hauerwas raises the question of what constitutes a "terminal point" in this war, which is precisely the question we raised in the editorial. We believe that a prudential judgment that there is an end to the threat of what President Bush called "every terrorist group of global reach" might constitute such a terminal point. As we also said in the editorial, that stated goal will require refinement in the months and years ahead.

The tactical use of "repugnant tyrannies" in the war against terrorism is no more an instance of moral "consequentialism" than is our approving of the police using a thief to catch a thief. In neither case should there be, nor need there be, complicity in the evil done by others.

Prof. Hauerwas asks who is the "we" in the editorial, and suspects that it is the American "we." He is right. The prior "we"—prior in time and allegiance—is the community of discipleship. In accord with the *Letter to Diognetus*, for faithful disciples in America this is our homeland on the way to our true home in the Kingdom of God.

Prof. Hauerwas says that we "fail to indicate any concrete political position Christians must take" that would indicate our faithfulness to the teaching of the *Letter to Diognetus*. He well knows that we take many positions challenging the laws, policies, and customs of this country. We also take the concrete political, and moral, position of supporting this just war.

No, the appropriate mood of the American people should not be remorse, at least not remorse understood as self-reproach. We did not start this war. The appropriate mood is sadness that we live in a world where defensive war is sometimes necessary, and of resolve to see that justice prevails. Such resolve may be an instance of renewal closely associated with patriotism, which is closely associated with the "communities of character" about which Prof. Hauerwas has written often and well. We do not as a society "need to be renewed through war," but the readiness to do our duty in response to great injustice may entail a measure of moral renewal.

Of course, and as we said, we should be cautious in speaking of a

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war of civilizations. We also said what Prof. Hauerwas omits, namely, that Muslim leaders bear the primary responsibility for saying whether or not it is to be understood as a war of civilizations.

We do not "accept the liberal story of the wars of religion as the legitimating narrative for the nation-state." We do acknowledge the tragedy of wars of religion, and Christianity's role in the achievement of democratic pluralism.

It is true, and a truism, that "religion" in public life is not always or necessarily a "good thing." We don't know why Prof. Hauerwas feels a need to remind us of a truth so regularly articulated in these pages.

He writes, "At the very least the Editors owe us an account of when we might have to contemplate surrendering because a conflict could not be fought justly." It is hypothetically possible that our cause may be defeated because we cannot prevail by just means. We hope, pray, and believe that that will not happen. But we owe no such account as Prof. Hauerwas demands because it is morally imperative that we never surrender, or contemplate surrendering, to terrorists or terrorism.

Our disagreement with Prof. Hauerwas on just war and pacifism goes back, as he well knows, many years. He should not be surprised that we mean what we have always said, as we are not surprised that he means what he has always said. The resulting, and conflicting, judgments about what is our moral duty in the present circumstance may put a strain on "friendliness" but will not, we hope, jeopardize friendship.

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This Time

The Body's Possibilities

Alicia Mosier

One week after the terrorist attacks of September 11, I went to the ballet. I wasn't looking forward to it. In the days since the attacks, friends and colleagues had provided critical comfort and support, but I was nowhere near ready to watch something whose only purpose was to be beautiful. In those days, it seemed as impossible as watching a sitcom or listening to Louis Armstrong. Such things seemed, in the face of Ground Zero, offensively blithe. Like someone recovering from a night of violent illness who can take just bread and water, I found myself able to stomach only the bland, sober food of network news.

But because I had been assigned weeks earlier to cover the performance for a dance magazine I write for on the side, I went to the ballet that night. It was a gala opening of the Dance Theatre of Harlem at historic City Center in midtown Manhattan. Just as before, New York's dance royalty would be in attendance; premieres and speeches would go on as planned. But the city was still shaken. One could sense that few people were entirely comfortable in their glitzy dresses and tuxedos, and that the critics and the dance lovers were as nervous about being in a large public place as they were glad to see each other safe.

Then the curtain went up, and something strange happened. For a week, we had been so focused on the bodies at Ground Zero: dismembered ones, vaporized ones, all dead. At that point we thought there might still be survivors, though with every day the hope grew dimmer. Most of those people had just disappeared; all that was left of them were the faces on the flyers posted on lampposts and mailboxes all over the city. But here, on stage, there were moving bodies, strong and fragile and graceful bodies—bodies of live human beings. The sight was so potent that I had to look away. Tears came to my eyes when I looked back at the stage and saw the extraordinary things the dancers were doing there, in the noble patterns of the choreography, as the music sang through their steps. I regained enough composure to watch the ballets carefully and take notes for my review, but what strikes me now about that evening is not just the works themselves. It's what the art of dancing said about the creatures that we are.

Dance is not an acquired taste. Most people either love it or they don't, and if you've got the bug it can easily take over your life. Ballet lovers are perhaps the most fanatical of all, forever going on about "purity" and "the classical tradition" and "the language of gestural symbols" as their dance-immune friends politely smile and nod. In the pages of journals such as the estimable *Ballet Review*, critics write searching commentaries on everything from the way a young star at American Ballet Theater interprets George Balanchine's 1929 *Prodigal Son* to the literary origins of the ghostly Wilis in *Giselle*. For most people, though, ballet is a hermetic, old-fashioned world to which the natural response is either hostility (it perpetuates nineteenth-century stereotypes about women) or indifference (what's with all these people running around in tutus?).

The indifference is more to be taken seriously than the hostility. Those who find it revolting to watch a beautiful woman in pointe shoes—those satin instruments of torture, often referred to as "pink coffins"—dancing all night in a haunted forest to save the man who betrayed her (as happens in *Giselle*) are often the same sort of people who object to Jane Austen because her women never discuss anything except their prospects for marriage. They miss the point. Those who find ballet boring, however, argue that there's not even a point to miss. Music, painting, literature—these art forms speak to our minds and hearts in ways that both deepen and transcend what we see in the everyday world. Ballet seems to be only a notch above pantomime in what it can tell us about the human condition. It's just people doing things with their bodies to music. What's more, it's ephemeral: after a dance is done, it's gone. It does not endure like a poem or a sculpture; it stays in your mind barely half an hour after you leave the theater. The images pass, and all that remains are snippets of music and the memory of a bit of floating tulle.

But look closer. First: those bodies. What do they show? The human form has been an inspiration for artists since at least the cave drawings at Lascaux. In dance, it is not just the form one sees, but the life—the possibilities—of the body itself. Dance is the most living art form there is, taking as its instrument the muscle and bone that is our first point of encounter with the world. In ballet, that instrument is honed by years of training in a technique that goes back to the seventeenth century. The placement of the feet, the angles of the body, the curve of the arms above the head—all are as delicately calibrated and informed by tradition as the finest timepiece, demanding a

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constant awareness of both physics and grace. This is the body perfected.

Perfected, yet still imperfect. One of the attractions of a dance performance is the challenge it presents to the dancer. Will this individual—for each body, each personality is distinctive, even after such rigorous training—manage not only to get through all her steps but to present something of herself and even find some new insight in these movements through time and space? "Insight" in ballet is, admittedly, a mysterious quality; it has to do in part with the dancer's response to the music, the way she picks up its nuances of mood and embodies its rhythmic dynamics. Because the vocabulary of classical ballet is so small—it is based on only five positions (even, some purists say, on the fifth alone)—it takes a sophisticated artist to say something compelling with it. Poor training or physical flaws can stop a dancer from ever reaching that level of accomplishment. Then again, an imperfect body (such as Margot Fonteyn's) can bring forth unparalleled physical poetry.

There is also the element of risk. We are dealing, after all, with people who are subject more than almost any athlete to injury and nerves and fatigue. In a full-throttle story ballet such as *Swan Lake*, the ballerina is on stage for almost two full hours; her biggest challenge (the infamous thirty-two fouette turns) comes at the very end of the night. In every performance, the audience lives the role along with the dancer; we track her timing and her line as she negotiates the sometimes terrifying waters of the choreography. We wait to see if she will fail. More than that: we wait to see if she will triumph.

And every so often—maybe only a few times in a generation—we get the kind of thrilling experience that the critic Arlene Croce described watching Suzanne Farrell, at the height of her career with the New York City Ballet, in a 1978 performance of *Chaconne*, a work created for her by George Balanchine:

> To watch Farrell stretching a Farrell part is a front-line experience; dancing just does not go further. On this night, there were quantitative embellishments of all sorts: quadruple pirouettes, sixes instead of quatres in the entrechats, even triple soutenu turns. But quantity is not the end of virtuosity. What Farrell achieved was a heightening of all those fluid transactions between extreme ends of her range—between allegro and adagio—which Balanchine wrote into her role. And though she advanced to the very limit of the ballet's style, she never toppled into distortion.

Keep in mind that Croce is talking about a human being whose only instrument is her body, and the magic becomes clear. In Farrell's dancing, she *saw music*. In her movement she saw a physical expression of allegro and adagio, mirth and solemnity, delicacy and grandeur—qualities that the music (in this case, a suite from Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*) suggested to the choreographer, who created a ballet in which they were brought to visibility by his ballerina.

The body is ephemeral. Like a dance, it fades before our eyes. And yet, in dance, one sees not just the glory of the human form—quite simply, how beautiful it is—but what can be done in the midst of (indeed, *utilizing*) its limitations. Lincoln Kirstein, the cofounder of the New York City Ballet, once remarked that ballet, with its grateful acceptance of its circumscriptions, is essentially conservative. He continued: "The excitement inherent in the moving human body, untouched by any mechanism save its own perfected anatomy, nervous system, and personal grace, released in legible plasticity on opera-house stages, is still an incomparable metaphor of humane possibility, mastered by mind and muscle, schooled by history, reincarnated in styles and visions of a hundred generations of repertoires."

On that night back in September, with thousands of lives ground to ash just a few miles away, to see that metaphor in the flesh was overwhelming—to watch a dancer cross a stage, and then take flight. FT

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Opinion

The Mess That Is Marriage

Gilbert Meilaender

I had occasion recently to ponder the service folder from a wedding. In many respects this wedding could probably have taken place in any Protestant church, though it happened to be Lutheran. Indeed, the rather good music might have suggested a Lutheran setting, even as the utter lack of congregational singing might have warned one that not all would be well. There in the service folder was the now almost obligatory candle ceremony, a reading from Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet*, and a sentence from Anaïs Nin about the importance of friends.

On the last page was a passage from Lord Byron, the great romantic poet, addressed here by the bride to her groom. I reproduce it exactly as it appeared there:

> *Is there anything on earth or heaven*
> *that would have made me so happy*
> *as to have made you mine long ago?*
> *And not less now than then,*
> *But more than ever at this time.*
> *You know that I would with pleasure give up*
> *All here and beyond the grave for you. . . .*
> *I was and am yours freely and most entirely,*
> *To obey, to honor, to love*
> *And fly with you when, where, and how*
> *You yourself might and may determine.*

What caught my attention immediately was how obviously pagan such a sentiment is. To give up—with pleasure—"All here and beyond the grave" for another human being must be idolatrous, unless, of course, we do not really mean "All." Even the Cavalier poet knew better when he wrote: "I could not love thee, dear, so much, / Loved I not honor more."

I decided to investigate a bit more, and it turns out that a little learning is a very dangerous thing indeed. Recognizing my own limits—and the life and writings of Lord Byron is definitely among them—I turned to my sister Marion for a bit of literary detective work. I had assumed that the passage quoted in the service folder must come from one of Byron's poems. Marion immediately suspected otherwise, since, as she told me, Byron was far too attentive to meter and rhyme for this to come from his poetry. She suspected the letters, and that, indeed, is where she found the passage.

It comes from the postscript to a letter written by Byron, probably in August 1812, to Lady Caroline Lamb. When she and Byron met in 1812, she was married to William Lamb (who later, as Lord Melbourne, was Prime Minister for a time under Queen Victoria). Their affair lasted about three months, though Lady Caroline continued to pursue Byron's attention and affection after the affair had ended. Indeed, explaining why he no longer was attracted to her as he had been, Byron went so far as to write her (in November 1812) that "our affections are not in our own power"—which is true enough, of course, and is precisely the reason that the marital vow exists to bind us even as our affections come and go. Lady Caroline was neither the first nor the last object of Byron's affections. Even after his marriage he had incestuous relations with his half-sister—an affair sufficiently scandalous that he was forced to leave England forever in 1816.

To what point have we come—how greatly have we failed—when a Christian bride thinks it appropriate to express her love for her husband in these terms? They come not from the Church's tradition or sacred books, nor even from the wisdom of acknowledged Christian thinkers. Yet they appealed to an uninstructed mind, who perhaps thought of the marriage rite not as the Church's but as her own. If the day comes that devotion in such a marriage flags, or if love—as is its wont—is urgently drawn toward a new beloved, it is unlikely that the Church will be in a position to say much. If it is "our" marriage, founded on our own fleeting emotions and attachments, we will do with it pretty much as we please.

We will expect the Church to support us and affirm us as we dissolve our marriage and to hold itself in readiness to celebrate any new nuptials we may decide to undertake. I do not think our congregations realize how deeply such practice has undermined our ability to take seriously our own deepest affirmations. For the last quarter century Protestant churches, certainly Lutheran ones, have been—in their architecture, their liturgies, and their teaching—emphasizing the sense in which the Eucharist is a family meal. In my own view, this has been to the detriment of some more fundamental theological emphases, but one cannot deny the legitimacy of this angle of vision. It is a meal, therefore, for the reconciled, for those who can truly share the greeting of peace before the meal.

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But it is shared by people whose marriages have been broken, who remain unreconciled, and who—because we can do no more than "support" them in their brokenness—must experience our liturgies, architecture, and teaching as profoundly dissonant and unconvincing. Our speech and action are really idle, signifying nothing—and therefore able to be ignored when we so desire.

Whether our churches really have the will to reclaim the marriage rite as their own is far from certain. A friend recently called to my attention a short piece by a Lutheran theologian who wanted to argue that marriage does not belong in church. He wrote that marriage is a purely "secular" event—the concern not primarily of the Church but of civil society. Hence, we would, he suggested, be better off not speaking of such a thing as "Christian marriage." Now, of course, those who know anything about Lutheran theology will recognize this approach. It is tied directly to Luther's rejection of marriage as a sacrament that dispenses saving grace, and, even though I do not think this was the Reformer's most insightful moment, I am willing to grant that marriage is not a sacrament in that sense.

Granting this does not mean, however, that it is particularly helpful—or theologically astute—simply to repristinate in our cultural moment a sixteenth-century position. Doing so ignores the fact that it took centuries of cultural transformation for the institution of Christian marriage, grounded in an agape as faithful as God's, to shape and discipline the love we call eros. We might be astonished to see a Christian thinker so blithely ignore that work of cultural formation, so eager to repristinate a position that perhaps made sense in another time and place without contemplating its effects in our culture. The theologian's punch line, however, makes things clear. It is that the Church need not argue about blessing same-sex unions, since it should not bless any marital union. These are matters for civil government to control.

Such a church will be mute in the face of a pagan world. Indeed, for my money at least, far preferable is that strong, healthy paganism of the bride who at least knew—as Plato did—that in her eros was something straining for the Eternal. She must have sensed that on this day she was making one of the most significant promises we ever make and undertaking a project that would shape her entire life. Looking for someone to whom she could give herself "freely and most entirely," someone with whom she could "fly . . . when, where, and how / You yourself might and may determine," she was looking for God. Our churches serve her and others like her best if they seek to reclaim "Christian marriage" as an institution into which we enter but whose terms we do not define. Unless and until we do that, we will not even begin to order rightly the mess we have made of marriage.

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The Continuing Irony of American History

Wilfred M. McClay

Christianity has always had a complicated, even paradoxical, relationship to the world. It is, first and foremost, an incarnational faith, which means that it is neither entirely transcendent nor entirely worldly in character. It steadily partakes of both. The Word became Flesh, and dwelt among us. And Christianity departs from its true nature when it leans too much in the direction of one or the other polarity, overemphasizing either the transcendental or the worldly. Both deserve to have their proper weight. And the most influential of the classic Christian heresies are traceable not to wild-eyed distortions but to more subtle errors of imbalance and one-sidedness. Arianism denied Christ's divine nature; Docetism denied his human nature. Each fell short of the full Christian understanding by failing to embrace the full meaning of the Incarnation.

Christians are to cherish the world, then, and accord it a high degree of respect in keeping with the majesty and dignity of its Maker. This injunction applies not only to the things of nature, which is relatively easy, but also to the things of man, which can be rather more challenging, especially when one is talking about the realm of politics. Yet it is required. It is easy for us to see God's hand in a beautiful sunset, but rather harder to see it operating at meetings of the local Board of Public Works, let alone the United States Congress. Yet Jesus' great saying about the need to distinguish between what is Caesar's and what is God's is among other things a remarkable endorsement of the legitimacy of secular political authority. As such, it serves as a basis for one of the great distinguishing marks of Christianity: *Caesar is accorded his own proper sphere of influence.* We sometimes fail to take in the full significance of that fact, even though it is explicitly confirmed in the language of Romans 13. But Jesus' words also amount to an unyielding declaration regarding the unpassable *limits* upon Caesar's authority. So the honor and respect accorded the world, and its worldly authorities, are genuine but finite. And they become wrongheaded, sinful, and idolatrous if allowed to extend further than is their due.

The principle is clear enough. But sorting out the specific and practical implications of this position has always been exceedingly difficult. Just what *does* it mean, practically speaking, to be in the world but not of it? What are we to do when our Caesars turn vicious or corrupt? Why couldn't Jesus have given us more specific details, instead of all those elusive parables? Why didn't he spell out his positions on war, representative democracy, capitalism, the death penalty, term limits, and the Electoral College? We cannot know the reason for the omission, but it seems the better part of wisdom to assume that it was intentional. Christ did not come to put an end to politics—at least not yet. We are not meant to rest easy in a faith that is reducible to a set of neat and inert propositions. We are meant to wrestle with this tense duality of flesh and spirit through all the days of our earthly lives—as Jesus himself did in his own—and in the process we will be forced to fall back on the grace and mercy and unfathomable riches of God for guidance. Somehow, mysteriously, the endless wrestling of flesh and spirit is what shapes the character God wants to build in us, a character both humble and resilient.

As part of this, we wrestle with the meaning of human history. There is no doubt that Christians and Jews accord singular importance to history, since they believe that God's purposes for humanity are expressed in the unfolding of time. They also believe

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that God intervenes in human history in ways both large and small—not only, let us say, to decide the fate of great wars, but also to heal the sicknesses of the lowly and bless the marriages of the historically obscure. It is not always clear which of these interventions is the more important, in the context of a faith that constantly delights in ironic reversals of status and contends that the last shall be first, and the first last; and that the stone that was rejected shall become the cornerstone.

In other words, even for a historical and incarnational religion like Christianity, the meaning of human history must sometimes be sought outside of history, where it is revealed rather than discovered. The entire pageant of human history, painstakingly assembled by generations of historians, with all its glittering panoply of great eras, large events, and major figures, may be no more important in the mind of God than the plight of the single sparrow that falls to the earth. Perhaps even less so. We should remember that, and should accordingly have a keen sense of modesty about our grasp of the ultimate meaning of history—and of history's relation, if any, to the ultimate. We should be diligent in searching for meaning in history, but be modest and skeptical about what we believe we have found therein. After all, we might be wrong. God may have something new and unexpected up His sleeve.

That modesty should extend, I believe, to our efforts to discern rightly the meaning of particular events, such as those that we now denote by the date of September 11, 2001. It may be partly sheer peevishness on my part. But when I hear people like CNN's Larry King refer to September 11 as "the day that changed America forever," and when I hear him proclaim that the horrors of that day constitute "the most important event in the history of the United States," I wince. It's partly because such portentous statements seem weightless and implausible coming out of the mouths of people for whom "history" is whatever happened two weeks ago, the same people who will be likely to assure us in their next breath that Britney Spears, or some other confection du jour, is the greatest pop singer "of all time." Imagine that. *All* time. That term might even span as much as a whole decade.

But more seriously, it seems utterly wrong to say that "everything changed." I don't mean in saying this to minimize the shocking character of what happened. But it is possible to be shocked without being surprised. Did we learn something new about human nature on September 11? Something we did not know before about the darkness of the human heart, the danger of our world, or the fragility of our lives? Surely the answer to all these questions ought to be obvious. No, if there is any emotion or impression that ought to predominate in us at this time, it is the sense of having awakened after a deep sleep. For the young—who have lived only through the last two decades of peace and prosperity—the world has indeed changed. But the Larry Kings of the world ought to know better. It is not the world itself, but rather our *understanding* of the world, that has changed. We woke up.

Christians in particular ought to have the distinct sensation not merely of awakening, but of being reminded of things that they already knew, and might otherwise have preferred to forget. As C. S. Lewis wrote in his splendid 1939 essay, "Learning in War-Time," the coming of war does not transform life in any fundamental way. Instead, he insisted,

> it simply aggravates the permanent human situation so that we can no longer ignore it. Human life has always been lived on the edge of a precipice. Human culture has always had to exist under the shadow of something infinitely more important than itself. . . . We are mistaken when we compare war with "normal life." Life has never been normal.

War taunts us with overwhelming evidence of our impotence in the face of death—death, both as a reality that each and every one of us faces, and death as a symbol for the ultimate futility of all schemes for earthly perfection and human mastery. For Christians, such a reminder is particularly apropos—even crucial. Lewis well expresses why:

> War makes death real to us: and that would have been regarded as one of its blessings by most of the great Christians of the past. They thought it good for us to be always aware of our mortality. I am inclined to think they were right. All the animal life in us, all schemes of happiness that centered in this world, were always doomed to a final frustration. In ordinary times only a wise man can realize it. Now the stupidest of us knows. We see unmistakably the sort of universe in which we have all along been living, and must come to terms with it. If we had foolish un-Christian hopes about human culture, they are now shattered. If we thought we were building up a heaven on earth, if we looked for something that would turn the present world from a place of pilgrimage into a permanent city satisfying the soul of man, we are disillusioned, and not a moment too soon.

Let us leave aside all the speculations about the larger meanings of September 11, many of which have been irresponsible and self-serving, the product of foolishness or opportunism rather than wisdom. Here,

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by contrast, is a meaning that is plain and unmistakable. Nothing we can say or do can justify the carnage, explain it away, or right the wrong that has been done. But we can at least take away from it all an intensified awareness of our real condition—the bad news without which the good news of the gospel is meaningless. And perhaps with that we can also take away a fresh awareness that the Christian faith can be tougher, more realistic, and more resilient than we ever thought possible—far more tough, realistic, and resilient than its secular competitors.

Plato's Socrates asserted that the chief aim of philosophy was learning how to die. This is a noble and profound notion, and a challenging one. But it is only a part of the truth. It leans, as all Platonism does, too far to the transcendent side of things. It bespeaks a yearning to escape the pain of impermanence by fleeing the flesh altogether. That is only part of the Christian insight. Even suicide bombers have learned how to die. For us, though, learning how to *die* must also mean learning how to *live*. Not only in the heroic moments, when all the light of life suddenly bears brilliantly upon a single point. And not only in moments of profound renunciation or detachment, when the light of the world grows dim and feeble. But also in the texture of ordinary life, when our duties are humdrum, our passions mundane, our horizons diffuse, and no one is watching or keeping score. It also means steadfastly honoring the flesh, not abandoning it, at least not until the appointed time to do so has arrived. Pope John XXIII put it very well, on his deathbed, when he said, "Every day is a good day to be born, every day is a good day to die." The Christian should be equally prepared for either one. The Christian life is equal parts life and death, death and life, flesh and spirit, tenderness and steel.

Christianity, then, is grounded in a uniquely complex view of our human nature—far more complex, I would argue, than its secular equivalents. And no theologian of the twentieth century has better captured this tensive complexity, and more compellingly rendered the underlying tough-mindedness of the Christian faith, than Reinhold Niebuhr—arguably the outstanding American public theologian of the twentieth century. Niebuhr had an unusually long and productive career, churning out innumerable books, articles, reviews, sermons, speeches, pamphlets, and other writings in the years between the First World War and the Vietnam War. He was not merely a theologian of great distinction, but a public intellectual of the first order, who addressed himself to the full range of public concerns. He had a mind of enormous scope and ambition, and there is hardly an issue of importance—political, social, economic, cultural, or spiritual—that he did not discuss in his many works. His 1952 book, *The Irony of American History*, is especially relevant at this historical moment. To see why, we must place it in the context of Niebuhr's broader theological project.

In his youth, Niebuhr was a devotee of the Social Gospel, the movement within liberal Protestantism that located the gospel's meaning in its promise as a blueprint for progressive social reform, rather than in its assertions about the nature of supernatural reality. Social Gospelers were modernists who had largely dismissed the authority of the Bible and the historical creeds. But they insisted that the heart of the Christian gospel could still be preserved by being "socialized," i.e., translated into the language of scientific social reform. As Walter Rauschenbusch, perhaps the leading figure in the Social Gospel movement, once put it, "We have the possibility of so directing religious energy by scientific knowledge that a comprehensive and continuous reconstruction of social life in the name of God is within the bounds of human possibility." The Kingdom of God was not reserved for the beyond, but could be created in the here and now by social scientists and ministers working hand in hand.

Niebuhr soon grew impatient with this kind of talk. He found the progressive optimism undergirding the Social Gospel to be utterly naive about the intractability of human nature, and therefore inadequate to the task of explaining the nature of power relations in the real world. Sin, he concluded, was not merely a byproduct of bad but correctible social institutions. It was something much deeper than that, something inherent in the human condition, something social institutions were powerless to reform. In what was perhaps his single most important book, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, published in 1932 in the depths of the Depression, Niebuhr turned the Social Gospelers' emphasis on its head, arguing that there was an inescapable disjuncture between the morality governing the lives of individuals and the morality of groups, and that the latter was generally inferior to the former. Individuals could transcend their self-interest only rarely, but groups of individuals, especially groups such as nation-states, *never* could. In short, groups generally made individuals morally worse, rather than better, for the work of collectives was inevitably governed by a brutal logic of self-interest.

Niebuhr dismissed as mere "sentimentality" the progressive hope that the wages of individual sin could be overcome through intelligent social reform, and that America could be transformed in time into a loving fellowship of like-minded comrades, holding hands around the national campfire. Instead, the pursuit of good ends in the arena of national and international politics had to take full and realistic account of the unloveliness of human nature, and the unlovely

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nature of power. Christians who claimed to want to do good in those arenas had to be willing to get their hands soiled, for existing social relations were held together by coercion, and only counter-coercion could change them. All else was pretense and pipedreams.

This sweeping rejection of the Social Gospel and reaffirmation of the doctrine of original sin did not, however, mean that Niebuhr gave up on the possibility of social reform. On the contrary. Christians were *obliged* to work actively for progressive social causes and for the realization of Christian social ideals of justice and righteousness. But in doing so they had to abandon their illusions, not least in the way they thought about themselves. The pursuit of social righteousness would, he believed, inexorably involve them in acts of sin and imperfection. Not because the end justifies the means, but because that was simply the way of the world. Even the most surgical action creates collateral damage. But the Christian faith just as inexorably called its adherents to a life of perfect righteousness, a calling that gives no ultimate moral quarter to dirty hands. The result would seem to be a stark contradiction, a call to do the impossible.

But Niebuhr insisted that the Christian life nevertheless requires us to embrace *both* parts of that formulation. Notwithstanding the more flattering preferences of liberal theologians, the doctrine of original sin was profoundly and essentially *true*, and its probative value was confirmed empirically every day. Man is a sinner in his deepest nature. But man was not *merely* a sinner, but also a splendidly endowed creature formed in God's image, still capable of acts of wisdom, generosity, and truth, and still able to advance the cause of social improvement. All these assertions were true. All have an equivalent claim on the Christian mind and heart. In insisting upon such a complex formulation, Niebuhr was correcting the Social Gospel's erroneous attempt to collapse or resolve the tension at the heart of the Christian vision of things.

With *The Irony of American History*, Niebuhr expanded this same tension into a consideration of America's role in the world. Published at the height of the Cold War, *The Irony of American History* was a stinging attack on communism—and at the same time, a stinging indictment of American moral complacency, and a warning against the moral failings to which that complacency made America vulnerable. Once again, Niebuhr was fighting on two fronts at once. Indeed, despite his passionate and unyielding opposition to the Communist cause, Niebuhr also believed that the United States resembled its antagonist more than it cared to imagine, and much of the book is devoted to making that case. Americans rightly complained of the Communists' dogmatic commitment to "philosophical materialism," the notion that mind is the fruit of matter, and culture the fruit of economics. But, as Niebuhr pointed out, Americans could be said to be equally committed to materialism in practice. "Despite the constant emphasis upon 'the dignity of man' in our own liberal culture," he contended, "its predominant naturalistic bias frequently results in views of human nature in which the dignity of man is not very clear."

But its materialism was not the greatest of America's moral dangers. More perilous, Niebuhr thought, was one of our principal points of pride: the deeply entrenched idea that America had a providential mission to fulfill in the history of the world, and that the nation was rendered peculiarly virtuous and innocent by the blessings of that history. Such a conviction permeated the history of the early republic. The Calvinist tradition, exemplified by the Puritans of New England, cast America in the role of a New Zion in the wilderness, a land of spiritual renewal for the entire human race. The Jeffersonian tradition viewed America as nature's nation, a place free of the encumbrances and tyrannies of older civilizations, where the New Man of a democratic future would be forged. At the core of American national vanity was the conviction that it was the nation of the new beginning. Even Abraham Lincoln, who was a political realist, called America "the last, best hope of mankind," words that convey the enormous cosmic consequences thought to be at stake in the American experiment.

Niebuhr did not deny the considerable elements of truth behind these assertions of American virtue and preeminence. And he would have been the last person to embrace a facile argument for the "moral equivalence" of the two sides. But he also insisted that the American nation's belief that it had "turned its back on the vices of Europe and made a new beginning" was not only naive but dangerous. It laid America wide open to the worst dangers of spiritual pride, precisely by blinding it to the failings that have marked its history, as they do any nation's history. Thus could a source of strength become transformed into a source of weakness. That, in a word, is what Niebuhr meant by the irony of American history—the tendency of American civilization to allow the decency of its motives and the nobility of its intentions to blind it to the sins and errors to which it is prone, and thereby allow its virtue to become the source of its vice.

So, he believed, the nation needed to be more rigorously self-critical in the exercise of its power. If this was all Niebuhr had to say about the matter, though, he would have sounded no different than any number of vocal critics of American civilization, then and now. But he said something more. He added that America also *had* to act in the world, and do so effectively. Indeed, it had no choice but to do so. Just as the sinful and imper-

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fect Christian is obliged to work intently for the cause of good, despite his incapacities, so a morally imperfect America was and is obliged to employ its power decisively in the world. Opting out is not an option: or rather, it is an option that is just as perilous as the alternatives it would avoid. Niebuhr puts it this way:

> Our culture knows little of the use and abuse of power; but we [now] have to use power in global terms. Our idealists are divided between those who would renounce the responsibilities of power for the sake of preserving the purity of our soul and those who are ready to cover every ambiguity of good and evil in our actions by the frantic insistence that any measure taken in a good cause must be unequivocally virtuous.

Needless to say, Niebuhr rejects either of these "idealistic" options, which correspond roughly to attitudes of isolationism and amoral self-righteousness, and continues thus:

> We take, and must continue to take, morally hazardous actions to preserve our civilization. We must exercise our power. But we ought neither to believe that a nation is capable of perfect disinterestedness in its exercise, nor become complacent about particular degrees of interest and passion which corrupt the justice whereby the exercise of power is legitimatized.

Be wise as serpents, when needs be, Niebuhr seemed to be saying. But know that you are being serpentine when you so act, and never cease to yearn for the purity of the dove.

Niebuhr concluded *Irony* by invoking the example of Lincoln, whose Second Inaugural Address near the end of the American Civil War exemplifies the doubleness of vision for which a Niebuhrian statesman should strive. Lincoln's great speech was notable for its unwillingness to demonize or diminish the soon-to-be-defeated enemy, and for its tempering of moral resoluteness by a broadly religious sense of a larger, imponderable dimension to the struggle. "Both sides," Lincoln famously declared, "read the same Bible, and pray to the same God. . . . The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes." The vantage point of a God who loves all His creatures was vastly greater than that envisioned by any fallible human cause.

Nothing in Lincoln's words suggests even a hint of faltering in the ultimate goal of destroying the Confederacy and reuniting the nation. And yet, the speech suggests not only Lincoln's charity for the enemy, but also his keen awareness of the arrogance, blindness, or triumphalism to which his own side was susceptible, flaws that might beget precisely the ironic effects that Niebuhr feared and deplored. That Lincoln himself may not have been entirely innocent of such flaws, and that his conduct of the war necessarily involved him in inflicting wounds that would be painfully slow to heal, only underscores the truth of his words. There was no morally pure path open to him. There never is.

What might we learn from Niebuhr about our current challenges, which are so different from those presented by the Cold War, though similar in requiring patience, persistence, and firm resolution? First and foremost, that it is right and just for Christians to support this war. Indeed, they have an obligation to do so. Niebuhr was no pacifist, and would not have been one in this case. War is one of the instances in which the use of coercive power to counter coercion is tragic but necessary. I suspect that Niebuhr might well approve of President Bush's remarkably skillful and sensitive handling of the events of the past few months—though perhaps with one notable exception. I suspect that he would *not* have approved of the President's frequent use of the language of pure and unadulterated evil to describe our foe. I suspect he would say this for reasons that have less to do with the justice of our cause or the cowardly contemptibility of our foe, than with us. It is not good, he would say, to call Osama bin Laden "the evil one," a phrase deliberately suggestive of Satan—not so much because our opponent is not evil enough, but because we are not pure enough ourselves, and cannot honestly offer ourselves up as children of light, poised against the children of darkness.

Let me be absolutely clear. I am not here expressing sympathy for the cheap anti-Americanism of the free-riding intellectual elites who disparage our country even as they benefit from its prosperity and freedom. I am not suggesting, as former President Clinton seemed to do, that the legacy of slavery and Indian removal somehow leaves us morally disarmed to act in the present and future. I agree that our cause is just, and frankly feel a thrill of moral satisfaction when I hear our President say so, bluntly and confidently. When the President says, "Let's roll," I'm ready.

Yet on September 10 many of us had grave, profound, and well-founded misgivings about the moral direction of our country. The causes of those misgivings did not disappear along with the thousands whose lives were snuffed out on the following day. Once again we are reminded that, for all the talk of radical change, there is also a sense in which *nothing* has changed.

And so we should not draw the wrong conclusions from the current conflict. We should not imagine that the problems we faced on September 10 have gone away. We should not imagine that, for example, the

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medical and biotechnological degradation of human life—expressed in everything from abortion, euthanasia, and physician-assisted suicide to human cloning and stem-cell experimentation—has disappeared. We should not imagine that this looming culture of death is what we are fighting for when we fight to preserve Western civilization. We should not fail to see, in fact, that the same prowess we use to defeat mass murderers a world away is threatening us too, arising out of our greatest areas of strength—our scientific and technological skills.

This is precisely the kind of irony that Niebuhr homed in on, a manifest strength that becomes a crippling weakness. And it is only one of many examples one could cite. America's "quest for happiness," he wrote, is suffused in irony, precisely because it has been so triumphant. We "succeeded more obviously than any other nation in making life 'comfortable.'" But we have "tried too simply to make sense out of life, striving for harmonies between man and nature and man and society and man and his ultimate destiny, which have provisional but no ultimate validity." This has had an ironic result. "Our very success in this enterprise has hastened the exposure of its final limits." The "naturalistic bias" that has produced a condition in which the very genetic foundations of human personhood are viewed as malleable has indeed led to a view of human nature "in which the dignity of man is not very clear." Though we are united for now in striking back at a proximate enemy, there are issues within our own house that should not be forgotten in the process, issues whose consequences may be far greater in the long run.

Nor should we allow ourselves to believe that in vanquishing this fanatical religious foe we are striking a comprehensive blow against all forms of "fundamentalism," making the world safe for secularism. We should be very careful about permitting this war to be so defined, as a war of secular Enlightenment against the darkness of superstition. Here too Niebuhr, who was no fundamentalist, is extraordinarily valuable. For he understood the doctrine of original sin—or more precisely, the Christian understanding of human nature, with its dualities and tensions—as central to American democracy. As Niebuhr often said, it is man's capacity for reason and cooperation that makes democracy possible—and his susceptibility to sin that makes democracy necessary. Ironically, the doctrine of original sin is the best guarantor of the possibility of the improvement of the human race, since it offers us a truthful and realistic view of the crooked timber of humanity.

Without a broadly biblical understanding of the sources of the dignity of the human person, it is hard to see how that dignity can continue to have a plausible basis in the years to come. And frankly, it is hard to see how our culture, which has become so profoundly post-Christian even within the Church itself, can ever find its way back to that understanding. But that is why hope is not the same thing as optimism. It is not ours to know how that restoration will happen, but rather to contribute what we can toward that objective, and leave the rest to a power beyond our ken. To that end, Niebuhr offers a wonderful formulation, a kind of catechism of theological virtue, to keep it all in perspective:

> Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore we are saved by love. No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as it is from our standpoint. Therefore we must be saved by the final form of love which is forgiveness.

Here, in the end, we glimpse the essential Christian paradox in a way that seems least paradoxical. For here one sees clearly how the transcendent makes the beauty of the world possible—how what is seen finds its surest grounding in what is unseen. That is precisely the beauty and poignancy of a consecrated life, for it is a lifelong labor to make the visible conform to the invisible. Such labor is a key element in the dignity of man. Yet one also sees how easily such consecration can go astray, when what is unseen is not the unfathomable riches of God, but a presentiment of some earthly perfection, whether it be a comprehensive reordering of economy and society, or a cure for every debility of the flesh. Much better to remember that we live on a precipice, and every human enterprise is inadequate and destined for shipwreck. The knowledge of that, too, is a part of the dignity of man. FT

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Jews, Christians, and Civil Society

David Novak

No one, save a prophet, could have predicted the radical change in the relationship between Jews and Christians since Western civilization narrowly escaped physical and moral annihilation in the Second World War. Having narrowly escaped physical annihilation, Jews have had to look at the world surrounding us anew. There some of us have discovered Christians facing us on the immediate horizon in a new and favorable way. Having narrowly escaped moral annihilation, Christians have also had to look at the surrounding world anew. There some Christians have discovered Jews on the immediate horizon in a new and favorable way. This mutual discovery of each other in new ways can be located on three levels.

First, mutual discovery has occurred on the theological level. Through sound historical scholarship, more Christians than ever before have learned how close Christianity has always been to its Judaic roots. The current Christian retrieval of Christianity's true origins has looked not only to the Hebrew Bible but also to the Second Temple Judaism out of which Judaism until this very day has been emerging. That is why Judaism can no longer be dismissed as an historical relic, as mere proto-Christianity. Through the very same type of scholarship, Jews have discovered that Christianity is not a one-time deviation from Judaism. Rather, Christianity has been developing in a trajectory continually parallel to that of Judaism. Jews need to see how much Christianity has had to be similar to Judaism in order to continually differ from it. From this some Jews have learned that we can discuss the Torah with Christians in a way we cannot discuss it with any other gentile people. Thus Jews and Christians today have found a way to talk to and with each other that is mutually affirming and that need no longer be either offensive or defensive, as interaction so often was in the theological disputations of the Middle Ages and the ideological polemics of earlier modernity.

Second, mutual discovery has occurred on the political level. Until quite recently, the political relationship of Jews and Christians in modernity had been almost totally hostile and suspicious. Jews had been seen by many Christians as being in the vanguard of the atheistic trajectory of modernity. Truth be told, some of the most prominent atheistic theorists have been Jews, and some of the most effective public atheism has been promoted by certain Jewish organizations. By "public" or de facto atheism, I mean public policies that advocate "don't ask, don't tell" when it comes to mentioning God in political discourse—even when used by a religiously observant Jew running for the office of Vice President of the United States. Because of this sad fact, Jews have been seen by many Christians as leading the attempt to keep religion—which for the vast majority of Americans is some form of Christianity—out of the public square. Indeed, many Christians have assumed that Judaism itself is identical with the modern progressive ideal that requires the public square to include only those "naked" Christians who have divested themselves of anything Christian at all. What most Christians do not realize, however, is that the public atheism of some prominent Jews, individually or collectively, has been even more injurious to Judaism than it has been to Christianity, inasmuch as naked Jews are still more vulnerable to public disappearance than are naked Christians.

Christians, on the other hand, have been seen by many Jews as resisting an ideal of modern progress that

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promises political and cultural equality to the Jews. To be sure, there are Christians who still long for the premodern world they think they once controlled—a world in which Jews were inevitably political outsiders and cultural pariahs. Nevertheless, many Christians now realize that the notion that Christianity truly controlled premodern European and American civil society is in many ways a romantic fantasy. Moreover, many Christians have come to the conclusion that, even where such religious control of civil society did in fact obtain, it was as disastrous for Christian witness of the Kingdom of God as it was for justice in civil society. Thus George Weigel, when speaking of the political theory and practice of Pope John Paul II, has forcefully stated that "the 'Constantinian arrangement' has been quietly buried" (see "Papacy and Power," FT, February 2001). Indeed, more and more Christians now do not regard modern political secularity as something to be overcome, but rather as another new challenge to Christian survival and witness in a still unredeemed world.

It is now less common than it once was for Jews to eagerly embrace the secularist ideologies of modernity. That embrace too was a romantic fantasy—in this case about an ideal, utopian future. Fewer Jews today see the earthly Messiah in modern political secularity. In its place is a more sober and less enthusiastic relation to the modern secular political situation—neither overly negative nor overly positive. Many of us, both Jews and Christians, want the public square to be pluralistic, which is neither partisan nor naked. Theoretically, at least, this has led to the discovery of some important new political commonalities between Christians and Jews. These political commonalities should not only be noted, but encouraged. The political playing field between us is more level than it has ever been before.

We have reached a point in history, at least in North America, when Jews and Christians can recognize each other as each other's closest neighbor rather than our most threatening enemy. The power of contemporary secularism, with its enmity against religion, has forced this recognition on both of us. There is nothing like a new common enemy to force us out of old isolations. Those who still affirm that "the earth is the Lord's" (Psalm 24:1) are becoming more and more aware that we are "strangers on earth" (Psalm 119:19).

The theological and political encounter between Jews and Christians has only just begun, but it promises to provide each of our communities with innumerable opportunities for original and fruitful discussion. Yet each topic—theology and politics—carries with it so many burdens that I wonder whether it is wise to separate them in our thinking.

The shortcoming of purely theological discourse between us, even when it is informed by sound historical scholarship, is that in the end it has to conclude that our great difference is greater than all of our commonalities. Our difference, of course, concerns Jesus. Truth be told, it is precisely when we both eschew the kind of rhetoric that assumes the other can be argued into our own faith position—be that argument exegetical, historical, or philosophical—that the difference actually becomes more pronounced. Eschewing polemical confrontations in theology means that we can live better together *in spite of* our overriding theological difference. But after all is said and done in theological dialogue between us, theology remains a conceptualization of the language of revelation and the worship it commands, and our central institutions of worship necessarily exclude each other. Jews cannot and should not receive communion in church; Christians cannot and should not be called to the public reading of the Torah in the synagogue. That divide outweighs even the most genuine experiences of dialogical intimacy.

The shortcoming of purely political discourse between Christians and Jews arises from the fact that it is largely built upon the perception of a common enemy. For a long time now we have confronted the militant secularism that permeates so much of the culture, and which now enjoys great political power. By *secularism* I mean the ideological matrix that regards human-made law not only as necessary for modern life—a point which Jews and Christians who have not retreated to sectarian enclaves can readily accept—but also as sufficient for human fulfillment. It is the modern embrace of the view of the ancient sophists that "man is the measure of all things."

This belief in secularism as a value goes far beyond the acceptance of the fact of modern *secularity*. All modern secularity requires is that our public norms and the arguments for them not presuppose common acceptance of Jewish or Christian revelation, even if these public norms are consistent with a particular community's revelation and the authoritative teachings it derives from that revelation. Thus Jews and Christians can only make public moral arguments that are based on ideas of the general human condition rather than on the singular experience of God speaking directly to one's traditional community. But it is ideological secularism, not the affirmation of secularity per se, that largely defines the culture of the universities, the media, the foundations, and the courts—that is, the most powerful elite culture in our society. It is what inspires them all. This culture, which is often quite self-consciously the heir of the Enlightenment, regards both Judaism and Christianity as obstacles in its quest for radical egalitarianism, which is as old as the temptation of Adam and Eve by the serpent that they too can

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become "like God" (Genesis 3:5) and thus replace God altogether. We can live in peace with secularity; we cannot live in peace with secularism as an ideal commanding its own realization in history.

Furthermore, recent terrible atrocities, especially those committed against the United States of America in the great cities of New York and Washington, have presented to Jews and Christians a very real enemy in militant Islam. This enemy despises Judaism and Christianity precisely because they both have accepted political secularity in the form of modern democracy and economic secularity in the form of capitalism.

We can, of course, find much commonality in our struggle against our common enemies. Yet this commonality could easily turn out to be one more ephemeral political alliance within modern political secularity itself. Enemies, after all, come and go, even as we remain. Current political anxiety often propels us into desperate political ventures, where we blindly embrace or are embraced by political ideologies that need no justification from Judaism or Christianity, even if they are not explicitly hostile to our traditions. When this happens, it is often impossible to discern just who is using whom. Jews and Christians should be wary of allowing Judaism or Christianity or even the commonality between them—what is best called "biblical religion"—to become the religious frosting on somebody else's ideological cake. If opposition to a common enemy is all we have in common politically, we risk slipping into all the usual political paranoia—that is, the *need* for a common enemy. Because of that temptation, we need to discover a commonality between us that is more positive and more enduring. For me, that commonality must come out of our concern with what Baruch Spinoza rightly called—even if he wrongly perceived it—the *theological-political* question, which is the third level of mutual discovery by Jews and Christians.

The theological-political question is not primarily the theological question of how we respectively affirm God, nor is it primarily the political question of how we prosecute the various wars we have to fight. Instead, it is the question of how faithful Jews and faithful Christians can enter into civil society together and survive there intact, let alone flourish there, without, however, either conquering civil society or being conquered by it. It is the question of how those who worship the Lord God of Israel, and who derive their law from this God's Torah, can in good faith join modern civil societies—which we have seen are inherently secular—and actively "seek the peace of the city" (Jeremiah 29:7). And it is the question of whether or not we need each other for that entrance into civil society.

The important thing to remember here is that although Jews and Christians participate in various societies, *as* Jews or Christians they are each members of one community above all others. The one is always prior to the many. These fundamental, constituting communities are even prior to political associations. There is, one might say, a profound difference between being a *participant in* something and being a *part of* something. Many Jews and many Christians are theologically and politically confused because they do not understand this essential difference and what follows from it. As Jews or Christians, we are parts of but one community—a true "body politic"—founded and sustained by God. As citizens of modern nation-states, by contrast, we are participants in civil societies and their institutions.

We Jews are part of the Jewish people, and that is our primary identity. Christians are part of the Church—the body of Christ—and that is their primary identity. Only subsequently do Jews and Christians participate in various associations, and we can only participate in these associations in good faith when we justify that participation by reference to the ends for which our own communities live and thrive. Furthermore, unlike totalitarian regimes that regard those under their political control to be *dispensable* and *disposable* parts, the Jewish people and the Church regard themselves as covenanted communities elected by God, both collectively and individually. Since God's election creates an everlasting covenant with all the members of His people, every one of us is, therefore, *indispensable* and *nondisposable*—at least in this world. We are all elected in our communities and we are all promised ultimate redemption with them—if we remain faithful with them to our God. Covenantal election, either by birth or by conversion, means that we can never be fully excluded from the people of God—at least in this world. The most that can happen to us here is that we need to be subjected at times to communal disapproval, even to the point of social isolation. But that is never permanent expulsion. The promise of reacceptance makes repentance possible and desirable. That explains why we can be loyal to our primary communities in a way we can never be loyal to any other human association of the world.

For these reasons, Jews and Christians can never regard any civil society, even that of liberal nation-states where they have thrived, as a comprehensive whole of which they are parts. No matter how much we love our current political associations, no matter how patriotic we might become when our state promotes God's law of universal justice, no matter how much we might be willing to risk our lives for the liberty of our own society, no Jew and no Christian should ever regard any other human group in which he or she participates to be the Chosen People. Only Israel is chosen, whether defined by Jews or by Christians. I do not see

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how any Jew can say he is practicing Judaism—or how any Christian can say he is practicing Christianity—while thinking of himself as a part of something larger, more inclusive, and thus more important than the people of God. That is the case with any worldly society, no matter how beneficent it is to us, no matter how just it is to others, no matter how noble.

To be a Jew, essentially and not just accidentally, is to regard the Jewish people as one's sole primal community. Election by the unique God requires total and unconditional loyalty to one people. All other social bonds are partial, however long-standing, however just, however lovable. No human society in which we participate can ask us to subordinate our membership in God's people to that society's ultimacy. A person can have multiple temporal locations in this world, but he or she can only be part of one body forever. Whatever other societies a Jew is connected to, he or she is only *a participant therein, never a part thereof.* As Augustine has taught Christians (a teaching, incidentally, that Jews can recognize as prophetic in origin), there is always a tension between the city of God and the city of man, even when it is a tension that benefits both the city of God and the city of man.

No authentic Judaism or Christianity can look to a human society for its primary orientation in the world. This theological-political fact provides a broader and firmer foundation for Jewish and Christian dialogue than any theological fact or any political fact taken separately. That is because Judaism and Christianity are religions that originate in God's election, are constituted by God's covenant, and anticipate God's redemption. Thus, when Thomas More was willing to suffer death as a martyr at the hands of Henry VIII because he insisted on being "the king's good servant, but God's first," he did not mean that his service to God was that of the Englishman, Thomas More. Rather, he meant that his service to God was that of Thomas More the Catholic, who is a part of the Catholic Church, which, in turn, is linked directly to God. To reverse the priority of the Church to the State, as More judged King Henry to be doing, is to substitute a humanly ordained society for the divinely ordained "congregation of the Lord" (1 Chronicles 28:8). But God's people and human authority can only coexist when human authority takes itself to be conditional, not absolute. As the Talmud puts it about abuses of human authority becoming absolute, "To whom do we listen, to the words of the master or to the words of the pupil?"

This great difference, this great ordering of our priorities as Jews and Christians, was brought home to me several years ago by an eloquent Christian woman at a conference held at the University of Toronto. This woman was born and raised in Barbados. Her ancestors were brought there as slaves from Africa. She had originally come to Canada as a domestic servant, and then became a high school teacher in Toronto. At this conference, one of the main speakers was an African-American political activist, and the main point of his remarks was to claim that the primary definition of who we are derives from race. Following these remarks, the woman stood up and with consummate dignity made the following remarks. "Sir, I must differ with you. Of course, I am black, and being black I have suffered the persecution and discrimination that has been the lot of most blacks in Western societies. Nevertheless, I will not allow you to define me as a person by the color of my skin. I am a Christian first and foremost. I am a black *Christian* like I am a Canadian *Christian.* Both 'black' and 'Canadian' modify the name 'Christian,' not vice-versa. What I ask of society is the freedom to be a good Christian and that society enable all people to be treated with just respect."

Following this statement there was a moment of stunned silence, during which I was quite jealous that this great soul wasn't a Jew speaking for us Jews. But she did speak for at least this Jew. What she was saying is that our identity does not come from definitions like race—definitions in which, as Jean-Paul Sartre rightly noted about anti-Semitism, our persecutors are allowed to tell us and the world who we are. This woman was saying that we must not allow our persecutors to define our primary community. Jews and Christians are defined by God's relationship with us, by our election into the covenant, and how we respond to that covenantal election. In hearing this authentically Christian voice, I heard an echo of the voice of Jonah, who when asked who his god was, finally declared, "I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord, God of the heavens" (Jonah 1:9). Only after this admission could he go to the pagan city of Nineveh and have anything at all to say there.

This moving story illustrates two important points about the theological-political situation in which we Jews and Christians find ourselves at the moment. The first point involves something Christians can learn from Jews, and the second point something Jews can learn from Christians.

Christians can learn from Jews that to be a Christian—to be one of the two peoples in the world who are covenanted by the Lord God of Israel—is also to be but one of many peoples in the as-yet-unredeemed world. Although Christians are convinced—as are Jews about themselves—that the Church is in the vanguard of the Kingdom of God on earth, they also believe that the Kingdom of God on earth will not be brought any nearer by assuming that the Church can or should claim to rule others in the world as it is presently constituted politically. The task of any people of God is to survive in the world, and to work in the world to ensure that the

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political order allows for our survival and the flourishing of our faith. That means working not only for a political order in which religious liberty is the most important right, but also one in which enhancing the dignity of human life in its various forms serves as the raison d'être of the society, especially the state created by that society.

Indeed, the protection of religious liberty, which is the political right to respond to or turn away from the God who elects us, is the right on which all other rights are grounded. In theological terms, it means that humans are made in the image of God, and that they are capable of a relationship with God. In political terms, it means that civil society must be seen as subsequent in authority to this supreme relationship. Civil society must respect the prior human freedom to either accept or reject any historical revelation that purports to realize the relationship between God and humans. And revelation is *in the world, not of it.* This recognition that we are not ultimately beholden to the political orders of the world, that they do not own our souls, is a Jewish point best appreciated by black Christians, who have suffered great persecution and see their redemption as Christians coming from God and not from any human power. That is why black Christians more than most other Christians have so identified with the initiation of God's redemption of His people Israel in the Exodus from Egypt.

What we Jews can learn from Christians is that (regardless of whatever else we might be) we are first and foremost a religion. Now, unfortunately, many Jews and many Christians have been deluded by Jewish secularists to think that Judaism—or "Jewishness"—is not a religion because even nonreligious Jews are considered to be part of the Jewish people. Therefore, it is argued that Jews are an "ethnic group" for whom Jewish religion is an arbitrary form of identification. But this is backward. Even nonreligious Jews, even atheistic Jews, are part of the Jewish people *because to be a Jew is to be a member of a community elected by God.* That is fundamentally different both from choosing one's own society and the mere accident of birth. It is God who makes a Jew a Jew. It is not a human choice—neither our own, nor that of our ancestors, nor that of our enemies. Election is a fundamentally religious event initiated by God, not man. Thus those who repudiate their obligation to keep the commandments of the Torah—that is, Judaism—may have left Judaism in practice, but they are still part of Judaism by their very existence. Speaking figuratively, they have gone AWOL, but they may not be court-martialed. Of course, we practicing Jews hope and pray that these sons and daughters who have strayed from the covenantal home will return, but neither our souls nor theirs would be well served if we attempted to coerce them back into the fold.

For most Jews, election begins at birth; it thus precedes any choice on the part of the Jew. As for those who convert to Judaism, their decision must be conceived as a compulsion that originally comes from God alone. Their free consent is a necessary but not sufficient condition of their being accepted as Jews. The same is true for Christians. If baptism is indelible, and if most Christians are baptized as infants, then most Christians become Christians like most Jews become Jews. This is so even in the cases of Christians who are "born again" and who are baptized as adults. Birth is, after all, the most involuntary event possible. (Incidentally, the term "born again" appears in Greek in the New Testament and in Hebrew in the Talmud.) It is only a modern, voluntaristic view of the covenant as a social contract that supposes that being a Jew or being a Christian is an individual option that is initiated or terminated by human will.

Of course, some Jewish secularists have conceived of Jewish identity along racial, even racist, lines. In the end, though, this means that it is the persecutors of the Jews who define who we are. But election into the covenant must not be taken as a matter of blind fate, as an accident of birth. If Jewish identity is conceived along racial lines, then to be a Jew today means little more than to be someone who escaped Hitler's genocide. But victimhood is not election. In the end, victimhood can only be cursed. Election, conversely, is a blessing, even if it sometimes means being more vulnerable than others in the world.

For these reasons, everything that is associated with Jewish ethnicity, including our Jewish attachment to the land of Israel and support of the Jewish state, is seen in the proper light only when it is defined in essentially religious categories. That should be our Jewish sense of self-identity, both to ourselves, to Christians, and to the various secular polities in which we now live. Neither racist definitions of Jewishness, which require no free acceptance or rejection of one's fate, nor voluntaristic definitions of Jewishness, which are based on the illusion of self-creation, can represent a coherent picture of who is a Jew. Being a Jew is neither fatal nor autonomous. It is only covenantal. Christians who truly appreciate the covenantal character of Christianity are in the best position to understand who Jews essentially are because they understand who they themselves are.

Because some modern nation-states have demanded the total subordination of their citizens, with horrendous historical results, many thoughtful people in our society have re-embraced the idea of the social contract along liberal, Lockean lines. Like any contract, the Lockean social contract is conditional and therefore limited. Like any contract, it does not create its parties; rather, its parties create it for the sake of their own

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prior interests. We exist both before and after the agreement itself. We come from somewhere else, and we transcend the agreement by our insistence on a right to return whence we came.

But where is that "somewhere else"? Indeed, those secularists who think that the democratic polity itself is their true home often weaken democracy by denying the legitimacy of any place beyond it. They have "nowhere else" to return to at the end of the political day. As such, they cannot coherently limit the power of the state and the civil society it makes possible. They can only hope to capture that power in order to realize their own partisan interests. Unlike the philosophers of Plato's ideal republic, these doctrinaire secularists do not strive for a vision of a transpolitical good, one beyond all human procedures. For them, what you see now is all you ever get. No wonder they are so impatient with Jews and Christians, who do have such meta-political, even metaphysical, commitments.

Secularists, whether self-identified or not, can be either liberals or conservatives. Despite their apparent differences, most of those who now call themselves liberals and conservatives accept the idea of the social contract and its corollary of the moral necessity of a limited state. They differ only on what should limit the power of the state. Moreover, contemporary liberals and conservatives each accept the most basic liberal idea that individual persons are fundamentally possessive in nature. The specific difference between them seems to be that conservatives emphasize the possession of material property, whereas liberals emphasize self-possession—that is, the possession of their own bodies. As the Talmud once noted, some people prefer their property over their bodies; other people prefer their bodies over their property. (But the Talmud assumes that we are to love God more than either our property or our bodies.) Both liberals and conservatives seem to want to be able to look forward to long weekends away from their political world, when and where they can enjoy either their property or their bodies. So much for keeping the Sabbath holy.

Because the idea of bodily self-possession is used by most liberals to justify such biblically prohibited practices as abortion, euthanasia, and homosexual unions, many thoughtful Christians and Jews have been gravitating in a more conservative political direction of late. The conservative—or, perhaps, "libertarian"—idea of possession of material property is less likely to be used as a warrant for biblically prohibited practices than the liberal idea of self-possession. Only when it comes to a perceived indifference to or rejection of biblically mandated concern for the poor do some conservatives seem to be religiously objectionable. Furthermore, whereas most liberals today seem to explicitly derive their morality from their secular political commitments, more conservatives seem to explicitly derive their morality from such pre-political commitments as biblical religion. The drift of Jews and Christians toward conservatism is thus understandable.

Nevertheless, Jews and Christians, as distinct from either liberals or conservatives today, come to the social contract not as individuals but as fully communal beings. The covenant characterizes a divinely chartered human community which, although not perfect in itself, testifies to the perfect Kingdom of God. As such, we can make the promises any contract presupposes because we are already bound by the covenantal promise of God, the initial part of which has already been fulfilled. We live in the city of God, however weak it now appears. We are only passing through the city of man, however strong it now appears. We do not look to the city of man for our salvation, now or ever. Indeed, those who look to the city of man for their salvation are inevitably disappointed and thus often become tempted by a dangerous cynicism.

This is precisely how Jews in medieval Europe were able to live with integrity in Christian polities. It was because the Christian monarchs with whom they could contract did not require the ultimate existential commitment of the Jews. In other words, they offered the Jews a secular modus vivendi. In contrast, when the ultimate existential commitment of the Jews was required by Christian monarchs—as it was in 1492 by Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain in their demand for conversion or expulsion—faithful Jews had to remove themselves from such societies.

Jews and Christians must be wary of any social contract that has a beginning but no final limit. Being a human device, such a contract can only be a rival to the covenant made by God with His people, which also has a beginning but no final limit. Hence any contract Jews and Christians enter must be both humanly initiated and humanly terminable. Only then can the covenant truly transcend this political arrangement. Civil society must be our challenge, not our temptation. Fortunately for us, the type of democratic polity that has emerged in the West does not require the absolute commitment required by God and His covenanted community. Only secularist totalitarianisms have attempted to replace the covenant with their own absolute claims on our total existential commitments. That is why Jews and Christians have such a stake in the success of the democratic polity. And, indeed, because our entrance into the social contract comes out of our covenantal commitments, we Jews and Christians can enjoy a far greater personal attachment to our social contract with a democratic polity than we could to any private contract negotiated between merely individual parties.

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The entrance of Jews and Christians into the social contract as communal beings, already socialized elsewhere, means that we bring forms of human community to civil society that need to be officially recognized by civil society and the state for the sake of our own communal interests. We also bring these forms of human community to civil society for the benefit of all its citizens, even those who are secularists. These two purposes function in tandem. It is in our communal interest to live in societies that affirm in law and public policy what we consider to be universally just. Only in such a political order can Jews and Christians live our own communal life in a way that does not make us, in the deepest sense, outlaws.

Moreover, the forms of human community we bring to civil society, such as marriage, are so socially beneficial that most of us would not object to their being appropriated even by those members of civil society who do not want to have any religious affiliation at all. Indeed, our desire should be to give more to civil society than we take from it. That too makes the social contract more like a biblical covenant, especially more like "the covenant between the king and the people" (2 Kings 11:17). Indeed, it can be shown historically that even Lockean notions of the social contract were very much influenced by the covenantal political theology of the English Puritans.

Now, of course, our common Jewish and Christian definition of marriage is currently under siege. It is very important that serious Jews and serious Christians stand up and take notice of what is happening and what is at stake. We are witnessing a concerted attack on the traditional idea that marriage is a heterosexual union. Many secularists now argue that marriage should be understood as a publicly sanctioned "relationship," and that the sex of the participants, even the number of participants, in that relationship is irrelevant. In other words, their view of marriage is essentially contractual. All that is required of the participants in such a relationship is that they be consenting adults.

That is quite different from the biblical idea of marriage in which man and woman "become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). That is, in our idea of marriage, only "a man and a woman" can be *parts of* one flesh in the same sense that Jews are truly parts of the Jewish people, and Christians are truly parts of the Church. Only a man and a woman can work with God in the creation of *one flesh.* That is not only a point made in biblical revelation; it is a matter of natural justice. That is why we can argue for it in the context of civil society and the law of the state. It is not something that is confined to our religious preserve. Carefully thinking out the best rational defense of this now vulnerable social institution by Jews and Christians will bring about more theological-political unity than a more narrowly "political" strategy ever could.

Jewish and Christian interests are thus parallel in many matters. But do we have something more than just parallels going for us? Is there some point at which we truly intersect?

On the theological level, as we have seen, we do intersect in the sense that both Judaism and Christianity are the traditions of two separate communities who are still emerging out of the same Hebrew Bible and the same Second Temple Judaism. The recovery of that reality has been an exercise of fruitful commonality between Jews and Christians of late, especially among our scholars. And that scholarship has had an effect on our broader communities, too. Nevertheless, theological intersection is limited by the agreement of both sides in the Jewish-Christian dialogue to avoid proselytizing. That necessarily means that we cannot make our full truth claims to each other theologically and expect the other side to sit still and listen to what could only be perceived as conversionist rhetoric. As such, theological dialogue between Jews and Christians can only work when these ultimate claims are consciously bracketed. That is why many Jews and Christians have stayed away from the dialogue. But today, truth be happily told, many Jewish and Christian theologians have begun to speak to each other under this constraint in good faith and with good results. Yet, at this point, our lines are still more parallel than perpendicular. Our theological intersection is little more than the affirmation of our common beginning.

On the political level, however, we can intersect with each other in the present and do so with less caution and restraint. But as we have seen, political intersection commonly ends up taking the form of ephemeral political alliances in the secular world. Here, too, our present political lines are more parallel than perpendicular. It is thus on the theological-political level that a deeper and more enduring intersection can and should be found and nurtured.

One of the greatest Jewish political theologians is the third century (Christian era) Babylonian rabbi, Mar Samuel of Nehardea. One of his most important aphorisms reads: "The only difference between the days of the Messiah and this world is the rule of the earthly kingdoms." The Messiah is an essentially theological-political reality. On this messianic level, one can see the greatest Jewish-Christian difference. Christians think the Messiah has already come; we Jews think the Messiah is yet to come. Yet the contrast with the world of modern secularism is far more dramatic. For secularists, there is no Messiah. Only those who wait for the Messiah's arrival or return can hope for a truly tran-

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scendent future and steel themselves against the allure of a fantastic, and impossible, utopia. So our greatest commonality, our most lasting intersection in this world, takes place when we understand each other to be waiting for the Kingdom of God—the coming-world—and refuse to settle for anything in this world as a substitute.

It is on this matter that we perpetually intersect, as we continually pass by, one another. We appear to collide at various oases in the wilderness because we are both travelers who can only temporarily rest before the end of the journey. And that restlessness includes—or ought to include—our refusal to be satisfied with whatever power we have in this world. We must refuse to see the Kingdom of God as an imperious extension of our own, rather pitiful, earthly power. The intersection of our mutually hopeful anticipation of the end is more positive and more profound than our current, ephemerally political alliances against common enemies, and this intersection surpasses our various theological conflicts in this world. As T. S. Eliot put it, "What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from."

It is when we better understand how and why we both need to carefully pass through the earthly kingdoms, whichever ones they might be, and when we refuse to take short cuts around them into a global future or flee away from them into a sectarian past, that we have the most in common. It is this journey itself that is common to us both, even when at any fixed point it is traveled separately and alone. Recognizing that might well enable each of us and both of us to transverse this world, this vale of tears, with more hope, more compassion, more care, perhaps even with more joy. "Let them go from strength to strength; let each one of them appear before God in Zion" (Psalm 84:8). FT

A Lesson in Hermeneutics

In Kenya, vervet monkeys take the ground
Until a sentry gives a chattering bark,
Which in the simple vervet lexicon
Means *snake*, and connotes *evil*, *death*, and *dark*.
Or else the sentry makes a guttural sound
That translates in our own more complex tongue
To hawk or eagle circling for prey,
And sends the monkeys scampering. Either way,
The monkeys must take action—jump or flee
Across the ground or to a sheltering tree.
Should one, instead, hearing a sentry speak,
Decide to deconstruct the fellow's meaning
And prove all urgent chattering oblique,
A python's fang or hawk's cruel curving beak
Will punctuate the monkey's idle preening,
Ending his dissertation in mid-squeak.

Paul Lake

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A Century of Skepticism

Albert W. Alschuler

The left and the right in American legal thought are more alike than different. They are united in their skepticism, especially their skepticism concerning values. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. sounded the principal theme of twentieth-century jurisprudence when he wrote that moral preferences are "more or less arbitrary. . . . Do you like sugar in your coffee or don't you? . . . So as to truth." Judge Learned Hand added that values "admit of no reduction below themselves: you may prefer Dante to Shakespeare, or claret to champagne, but that ends it." Hand insisted that "our choices are underived" and that "man, and man alone, creates the universe of good and evil."

Taxonomies of legal scholarship place both law and economics and public choice theory on the political right and feminist jurisprudence, critical legal studies, and critical race theory on the left. Nearly all of the scholars associated with these movements, however—like most of the pragmatists and functionalists in the center—echo Holmes and Hand.

Justice Holmes' letters and speeches revealed the depth of his skepticism:

> • I don't see why we mightn't as well invert the Christian saying and hate the sinner but not the sin. Hate . . . imports no judgment. Disgust is ultimate and therefore as irrational as reason itself—a dogmatic datum. The world has produced the rattlesnake as well as me; but I kill it if I get a chance, as also mosquitoes, cockroaches, murderers, and flies. My only judgment is that they are incongruous with the world I want, the kind of world we all try to make according to our power.
>
> • I think "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" infinitely more important than the vain attempt to love thy neighbor as thyself.
>
> • I see no reason for attributing to a man a significance different in kind from that which belongs to a baboon or to a grain of sand.
>
> • I take no stock in abstract rights . . . [and] equally fail to respect the passion for equality.
>
> • I think that the sacredness of human life is a purely municipal ideal of no validity outside the jurisdiction. I believe that force, mitigated so far as may be by good manners, is the ultima ratio. . . . Every society rests on the death of men.
>
> • Doesn't this squashy sentimentality of a big minority of our people about human life make you puke? [That minority includes people] who believe there is an onward and upward—who talk of uplift—who think that something in particular has happened and that the universe is no longer predatory. Oh bring in a basin.
>
> • You respect the rights of man—I don't, except those things a given crowd will fight for.
>
> • All my life I have sneered at the natural rights of man.

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Although Holmes said that he had values and called these values his "can't helps," his values were difficult to identify. They included only one political cause, his "starting point for an ideal for the law": "I believe that the wholesale social regeneration which so many now seem to expect, if it can be helped by conscious, coordinated human effort, cannot be affected appreciably by tinkering with the institution of property, but only by taking in hand life and trying to build a race. That would be my starting point for an ideal for the law."

Holmes wrote of "substitut[ing] artificial selection for natural by putting to death the inadequate" and of his contempt for "socialisms not prepared . . . to kill everyone below standard." He declared, "I can imagine a future in which science . . . shall have gained such catholic acceptance that it shall take control of life, and condemn at once with instant execution what now is left for nature to destroy." He spoke of the possibility of a future civilization "with smaller numbers, but perhaps also bred to greatness and splendor by science," and he wrote, "I can understand saying, whatever the cost, so far as may be, we will keep certain strains out of our blood."

Recent writings about Holmes describe him variously as "the great oracle of American legal thought," "the only great American legal thinker," and "the most illustrious figure in the history of American law." Holmes' view that rights are the bones over which people fight has found many champions in the academy.

On the left, members of the critical legal studies (CLS) movement are the heirs of Holmes. They take as their motto, "Law is politics," an aphorism that does not seem to refer to the politics of civic virtue. For CLS scholars, politics is who you cheer for. The white male elite who wrote the laws cheered for themselves; CLS cheers for their victims. That is all there is to it.

Many radical feminists and critical race theorists are also the heirs of Holmes. They deny the possibility of a principled response to the unprincipled subordination of minorities and women. "Feminism does not claim to be objective, because objectivity is the basis of inequality," writes Ann Scales. "Feminism is result-oriented. . . . When dealing with social inequality there are no neutral principles." Catharine MacKinnon adds, "When [sex inequality] is exposed as a naked power question, there is no separable question of what ought to be. . . . In this shift of paradigms, equality propositions become no longer propositions of good and evil, but of power and powerlessness, no more disinterested in their origins or neutral in their arrival at conclusions than are the problems they address." Kimberle Crenshaw, a founder of critical race theory, describes this movement as "grounded in a bottom-up commitment to improve the substantive conditions" of minorities rather than in opposition to "the use of race . . . to interfere with decisions that would otherwise be fair or neutral."

On the right, "public choice" theorists are the heirs of Holmes. They see most legislation as the product of the capture of the legislature by whatever group bid highest. Among the themes of public-choice studies have been that laws ostensibly designed to prevent securities fraud were the product of bankers' fears of losing savings deposits, that the votes of federal trial judges on the constitutionality of sentencing guidelines were affected by the prospects of the judges' appointment to appellate courts, that nineteenth-century politicians allowed fires to rage out of control to encourage the establishment of patronage-generating fire departments, and that members of Congress have supported the creation of federal bureaucracies in order to gain political support by aiding constituents who would be treated unfairly by these bureaucracies.

In their normative writings and in their descriptions of common-law doctrine, law and economics scholars generally moderate the view of law as an unprincipled dogfight that characterizes their analysis of the work of legislatures and administrative agencies. The economists substitute a milder version of the skeptical creed, a perspective commonly described as "applied utilitarianism." But the most prominent of the law and economics scholars, Richard Posner, resists this characterization. Posner maintains that welfare economists seek the maximum satisfaction not of all human desires but only of desires backed by wealth. He claims that by adding a wealth constraint to classical utilitarianism, he has made his moral relativism less troublesome than Jeremy Bentham's. In Bentham's utilitarian world, a sadist who derived enough pleasure from torture to outweigh his victim's suffering would be justified in tormenting her. Jeremy's joy could excuse Alice's anguish. As Posner describes his own vision of justice, however, a sadist "would have to buy [his or her] victims' consent, and these purchases would soon deplete the wealth of all but the wealthiest sadists."

As Arthur Leff summarized both Posner's bottom line and Bentham's, "Each of the Seven Deadly Sins is as licit as any of the others, and as any of the Cardinal virtues." In the absence of an external source of value, all human desires have become, for economists and many others, equivalent to one another. The pleasure of pulling the wings off flies ranks as highly as that of feeding the hungry. For economically minded scholars, the function of law, the market, and other social institutions is to achieve the maximum satisfaction of human wants regardless of their content (or, if you prefer Posner's variation, to achieve the maximum satisfaction of desires backed by wealth).

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Without the possibility of God, writers like Posner see no escape from their moral skepticism, yet their viewpoint falsifies everyday human experience as much as it does religious tradition. As the theologian James Gustafson observes, people are "valuing animals." They use their mental capacities to reflect about principles, duties, obligations, and ends. They examine critically the objects of their valuation. They rank desires on more than a scale of intensity. They sense that some desires are not simply stronger but more worthy than others, and they struggle toward a proper ordering of the objects of desire.

The skepticism of welfare economists and utilitarians, however, is only partial. They attempt to put on the brakes before skidding into skeptical free fall. Although utilitarianism views all desires as commensurable with all other desires (and although law and economics treats all desires as commensurable with money), utilitarianism remains an ethical system. It is egalitarian, ranking everyone's happiness as highly as the king's. (Richard Posner's wealth-driven version of the creed, however, abandons this virtue.) Moreover, utilitarianism sometimes demands altruism—for example, by requiring a not-very-happy middle-aged person to sacrifice her life to save the lives of two blissful children on the opposite side of the globe, thereby maximizing the aggregate amount of happiness.

But what makes this system just? Despite Bentham's insistence that "natural rights are simply nonsense . . . nonsense on stilts," does even this subjectivist ethical system require external justification? Can utilitarianism, wealth maximization, or any other ethical system make sense in the absence of "a brooding omnipresence in the sky"? Can one truly brake ethical skepticism halfway down? What's so great about egalitarianism, altruism, and human (or hippopotamus) happiness anyway?

In the absence of external justification, the desire that everyone's desires be satisfied is just another desire, and utilitarianism can be no more than a taste. Jeremy Bentham and his followers hoped to maximize happiness; Richard Posner and his followers seek to maximize wealth; and Oliver Wendell Holmes preferred taking life in hand and trying to build a race. Different strokes for different folks. People give up a lot when they give up on God.

Legal scholars of both the left and the right have tilted from Socrates on the issue that marks the largest and most persistent divide in all of jurisprudence. In Athens, four hundred years before Christ, Socrates contended that justice was not a human creation but had its origin in external reality. Thrasymachus disagreed; he insisted, "Justice is nothing else than the interest of the stronger." Ethical skepticism had a number of champions in the centuries that followed—for example, Thomas Hobbes, who wrote in 1651: "Whatsoever is the object of any man's appetite or desire, that is it which he for his part calleth good: and the object of his hate and aversion, evil. . . . For these words of good [and] evil . . . are ever used with relation to the person that useth them: there being nothing simply and absolutely so."

Throughout Western history until the final third of the nineteenth century, however, the views of such moral realists as Cicero, Gratian, Accursius, Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, Thomas Aquinas, Hugo Grotius, Samuel Puffendorf, Edward Coke, John Locke, William Blackstone, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln dominated European and, in later centuries, American law. The twentieth century may have given moral relativism its longest sustained run in Western history. (As I use the term, moral realism refers to a belief in mind-independent moral principles. I use this term and the term natural law interchangeably. Similarly, I do not distinguish between moral skepticism and moral relativism. I use both terms to denote the view that moral principles are the product of individual or group preferences without any grounding in external reality.)

I am not knowledgeable enough to confirm or refute the claim that the decline of societies always has coincided with a weakening or abandonment of the idea of natural law. Similarly, I do not know the extent to which intellectual movements shape society or whether they do at all. Nevertheless, in the words of scholar Albert Borgmann, "the nation's mood is sullen." The vices of atomism, alienation, ambivalence, self-centeredness, and vacuity of commitment appear characteristic of our culture. And when Perry Farrell, the lead singer of the rock band Porno for Pyros, shouts the central lyric of twentieth-century American jurisprudence, "Ain't no wrong, ain't no right, only pleasure and pain," another storm cloud may appear on the horizon. Perhaps, amid signs of cultural discouragement and decay, one should expect to hear this lyric from orange-haired, leather-clad rock stars as well as from Judge Posner.

The current ethical skepticism of American law schools (in both its utilitarian and law-as-power varieties) mirrors the skepticism of the academy as a whole. Many pragmatists, abandoning the idea that human beings can perceive external reality (right, wrong, God, gravity, suffering, or even chairs), maintain that the only test of truth is what works or what promotes human flourishing. At the end of a century of pragmatic experimentation, that standard has given us a clear answer: pragmatism and moral skepticism don't do either. They are much more conducive to despair than to flourishing. They fail their own test of truth.

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As pragmatism foundered, twentieth-century philosophy supplied a new and better test of truth. This epistemology goes by many names—coherency, reflective equilibrium, holism, and inference to the best explanation. (I do not suggest that these terms are synonyms—only that they have much in common and that they capture aspects of the same reasoning process.) As Michael Moore describes the core idea, "Any belief, moral or factual, is justified only by showing that it coheres well with everything else one believes. . . . One matches one's own particular judgments with one's more general principles without presupposing that one group must necessarily have to yield where judgments and principles contradict each other." In effect, current epistemology portrays analogy, induction, and deduction as a single continuous process. It emphasizes the complex, holistic, provisional, and nonfoundational nature of human reasoning.

How people regard the process of knowing (epistemology) bears on what kinds of things they think exist (ontology), and today's epistemology has the potential to reshape moral reasoning and law. Older images of human reasoning set up morals for a kill. They suggested that "logic" always could be pushed to a "premise" and that reaching this premise ended the game. At this end point, it was everyone for himself.

As Justice Holmes expressed this viewpoint: "Deep-seated preferences cannot be argued about—you cannot argue a man into liking a glass of beer—and therefore, when differences are sufficiently far reaching, we try to kill the other man rather than let him have his way. But that is perfectly consistent with admitting that, so far as it appears, his grounds are just as good as ours."

Whether people claimed that their premises came from God or admitted that they made them up, their values were the product of "can't helps"—of leaps of faith unaided by reason. In the end, one could merely assert one's own personal, existential faith—a faith that might not move any other rational person and that one was likely to assert apologetically and without conviction or with indefensible conviction. Unreasoning faith appeared unavoidable for everyone engaged in normative discourse, religious believer or not.

Religious believers today (the coherentists among us anyway) rely less on blind faith. We despair far less of human reason. People who consider us more dependent on faith and less committed to reason than our disbelieving colleagues often have things backward. More than four hundred years ago, John Calvin recognized the holistic and experiential basis of theological reflection: "Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But, while joined by many bonds, which one precedes and brings forth the other is not easy to discern."

Today's coherentist epistemology emphasizes that premises do not come from nowhere. They are usually the products of efforts to generalize our experience of the world. We may do this job of inference well or poorly—perceiving patterns sharply or dimly, misperceiving them, or missing them altogether. We move from induction to deduction to induction to deduction in continuous and, we hope, progressive spirals. We generalize, test our generalizations against new experience, then generalize again. Human reasoning does not resemble the operations of a hand-held calculator as much as it does the workings of a computer ranging over a large set of ever-changing data to determine a "best fit" line.

Gilbert Harman puts it this way: "If we suppose that beliefs are to be justified by deducing them from more basic beliefs, we will suppose that there are beliefs so basic that they cannot be justified at all." Traditional images of human reasoning portray the most important of our beliefs as the least justified. Harman underlines the new epistemology's response: "These skeptical views are undermined . . . once it is seen that the relevant kind of justification is not a matter of derivation from basic principles but is rather a matter of showing that a view fits in well with other things we believe."

One implication of this holistic vision of human understanding is that we need no longer mark a sharp divide between faith and reason. Older views declared that unless some "proof" of the existence of God was conclusive, belief in God could rest only on faith or revelation. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, the name of the game is not indisputable "proof"; it is inference to the best explanation.

This vision offers a clearer perspective on many theological issues—among them, the argument from design. It does so at the same time that twentieth-century science has multiplied the evidence in support of this classic argument. As scientists reveal phenomena as wondrous as anything in the Book of Genesis, we begin to perceive a more awesome God than God the Watchmaker, the already inspiring God of Newtonian physics. God, more fully revealed but ever more mysterious, is the God of the big bang and the expanding universe and of order in chaos and chaos in order. Moreover, the new epistemology, by emphasizing the unity of emotional and cognitive ways of knowing, has ended the banishment of our sense of wonder, reverence, dependence, and gratitude from our "reasoning" process.

Twentieth-century philosophy suggests the partial collapse of induction and deduction, of cognition and emotion, and of faith and reason. It also suggests the collapse of fact and value. Once we understand that we

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come to moral conclusions in the same way that we come to empirical conclusions, ascribing a higher ontological status to judgments of fact than to judgments of value cannot be justified.

An illustration may make this proposition less abstract:

> I once saw a man beat a horse. Among my thoughts on that occasion were:
> 1. That is a horse.
> 2. The horse is in pain.
> 3. The man's act is cruel.
> 4. The man's act is wrong.

Which, if any, of these things did I know?

Rays of light stimulated my optic nerves, and my brain interpreted the resulting electronic impulses, saying, "That is a horse." Yet my interpretation of the world could have been erroneous. I might have seen a mule, or it might have been a hologram. It might even have been a sensory impression fed to me, a brain in a vat, by a mad scientist.

Although people in my culture could have constructed other taxonomies, they had taught me a useful category, horse. In an instant and without bringing most of the process to consciousness, I considered the available data—color, size, configuration, movement, and more. I determined that the "horse hypothesis" fit. As Nelson Goodman observes, "Facts are small theories, and true theories are big facts." Facts and theories are both interpretations of experience, but it does not follow that one interpretation is as good as another. Someone who saw what I saw and said, "Why, that man is beating a frog," would not have gotten it right.

I often revise my interpretations of the empirical world. At one time, I might have thought that the stick protruding from the beaker of water was bent. I now infer that the same stick is straight. Whole cultures do what I do. Everyone once believed that the world was flat and the sun went around it; those hypotheses offered the simplest explanations of what they saw. But careful people then made closer observations. The old hypotheses did not fit, and the culture accepted new ones.

I knew that the horse was in pain in the same way that I knew it was a horse. The word pain gives a single name to many experiences. It speaks of a pattern in the world just as the word horse does. I envisioned what I would have experienced had the man whipped me, and some of the horse's visible responses to the whip were like those I might have exhibited. I inferred that the horse and I were members of the same interpretive community; we both knew the meaning of the whip. My judgment that the horse was in pain was, like most other judgments about the world, a potentially fallible inference, but I have enough confidence in this inference to call it knowledge. I knew that the horse was in pain.

When I concluded that the man's act was cruel, I again inferred a creature's state of mind from external circumstances. This time it was the man's state of mind rather than the horse's. Like many other words, the word cruel combines an empirical and a normative judgment within a single concept. Words with this characteristic are sometimes called thick ethical concepts. They illustrate that people rarely pause to distinguish fact from value in trying to make sense of their experience.

People who have followed me this far may get off before the last stop. They may agree that horses are real, that pain is real, and that cruelty is real. But right and wrong? Those things are not "real." They're subjective, relative, contingent, and socially constructed. If someone does not believe that horses are real, that horses can experience pain, or that people can be cruel, that person is crazy. But if this person does not believe that beating horses is wrong, why, that is this person's choice. Right and wrong are matters of personal or, at most, community taste.

It's a strange place to get off. The thought that the man's act was wrong rushed into my mind as quickly and forcefully as the thoughts, "That is a horse," "The horse is in pain," and "The man's act is cruel." Moreover, the word wrong categorizes and simplifies experience in the same way that the words horse, pain, and cruelty do. In what sense could the latter terms, but not the former, be regarded as capturing external reality? Why should I give greater credence (or different credence) to the first three judgments than to the last? What error lies in regarding all of the words that leapt to my mind as capturing genuine characteristics of what I saw? People consider the unseen forces of Einstein's physics real because hypothesizing these forces unifies and explains a variety of human experiences. I believe in God, right, and wrong for precisely the same reason.

On March 18, 1989, when I was forty-eight, I knelt beside two other men of equally advanced age and became a Christian. My baptism would have astonished most of the people who had known me in my adult life. It was prompted partly by circumstances of the sort that commonly lead adults to reconsider their direction (in my case, concern and guilt about a child in trouble and distress about a recently failed romance). It was prompted, too, by a teacher, J. B., who succeeded in making sense of things that never had made sense to me before. Finally, odd though it may seem, my conversion from agnosticism to Christianity was prompted by long-standing dissatisfaction with legal and other academic thought as I had experienced

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it throughout my career. My professional experience had taught me that law not grounded on a strong sense of right and wrong was lousy law. Thinking about law, like thinking about most things, can lead one to God.

In recent years, a resurgence of legal and philosophical writing about moral realism has made natural law respectable again. The image of returning may be appropriate. A child's trust in her parents is likely to give way to adolescent rejection; and when the child becomes an adult, her adolescent rejection is likely to give way to a new and wiser appreciation of her parents' virtues. In the same way, lawyers of our new century may develop a new, more mature appreciation of their natural-law heritage—a heritage that lawyers of the past century mostly dismissed as "transcendental nonsense." The iconoclasm and skepticism of the twentieth century may then yield to a new idealism and a new spirituality.

In the interim, we should stay with T. S. Eliot:

There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
And found and lost again and again; and now,
under conditions
That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor
loss.
For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our
business. FT

On Giving Blood to the Red Cross

Flow, blood; you are not me
but I have known your intercourse
since the crimson dawn of infancy
and felt your churning force.

Rest, heart; prepare anew
for I will vein a richer flood
of this eddying life and pressure through
my system bolder blood.

Blood is strength but blood turns sour
wrecks the font and wilts the flower;
only baptized blood has power.
With this blood I signify
fresh life to sanctify
each remaining pulsing hour.

Rise, soul; a new sun dawns
and childhood beckons ever when
in thy freshened frame an impulse fawns
on life come back again.

Richard Novak, C.S.C.

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The Ineducable Left

Brian C. Anderson

The far left's disgraceful response to September 11—it has temporized about terror, embraced moral equivalence between the Islamist fanatics who killed thousands of innocent Americans and the military actions of the democratically elected U.S. government, and even blamed the U.S. for the atrocity—shows that its hatred of democratic capitalism and, more broadly, Western civilization itself remains fierce more than a decade after the collapse of socialism. The intensity of this hatred will come as no surprise, however, to anyone who has paid attention to the praise that the academic left and its sympathizers in the liberal media have been showering on one of the most pernicious books published in recent memory: Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's encomium to anticapitalist revolutionary violence, *Empire*.

This forbidding five-hundred-page book of political and social theory, which ends with a surreal celebration of "the irrepressible lightness and joy of being Communist," is that rare commodity: a genuine academic bestseller. Its publisher, Harvard University Press, has gone through ten printings and has sold foreign translation rights to at least ten nations across the globe. Upscale bookstores have a hard time keeping it in stock. Everybody is talking about it.

Small wonder, given the eye-popping reviews it has received. Postmodernism guru Frederic Jameson of Duke University calls it "prophetic" and "the first great new theoretical synthesis of the new millennium." Slavonian philosopher Slavoj Zizek celebrates it as "nothing less than a rewriting of *The Communist Manifesto* for our time" (this, needless to say, he deems a good thing). "Brilliant," "erudite," "extraordinary," "an amazing tour de force," "irresistible," "revolutionary," "a work of visionary intensity"—left-wing intellectuals have exhausted superlatives describing it. The liberal press has been just as enthusiastic. The *New York Times*, in a glowing write-up, crowns *Empire* the "Next Big Idea." *Time* breathlessly commends it as "the hot, smart book of the moment." The influential British weekly the *New Statesman* gushes that *Empire* has "turned conventional thinking on its head." Not since Michel Foucault's history of sexuality started appearing in English translation two decades or so ago has a work of high theory produced such palpitations on the left.

What's all the excitement about? In part, it is the book's grandiose ambition that has generated the buzz. Hardt and Negri seek to update Marx's *Capital* for the era of economic globalization. In doing so, they plunder every imaginable recent source of academic foolishness, from postcolonialism to Queer Theory to French post-structuralism, and wed it to Marx, Lenin, and even Mao, making the book a kind of up-to-the-minute manual on how to get tenure in today's university. *Empire*'s pages brim with the science-fiction-like neologisms that typify much contemporary academic writing: "agentic," "biopower," "deterritorialization"—words that give those who wield them the sense of gaining Shaman-like access to hidden realms. Unlike most leftist writing since the fall of communism, which has been dourly pessimistic, *Empire* is also brashly optimistic, heralding the revolutionary dawn of a utopian postcapitalist age.

But the deeper reason for the zeal, I think, is the unusual biography of *Empire*'s Italian coauthor Antonio Negri. The book's glossy jacket matter-of-factly informs

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us that he is "an independent researcher and writer"—and an "inmate at Rebibbia Prison, Rome." In addition to having a career as an influential political philosopher, with widely-translated books on Spinoza and Marx to his credit, Negri is a convicted terrorist.

In 1979, the Italian government arrested Negri, at the time a political science professor at the University of Padua, and accused him of being the secret brains behind the Red Brigades, the Italian version of the Weathermen in the U.S. or the Baader-Meinhoff Gang in West Germany—left-wing groups that during the 1970s sought to overthrow capitalism through campaigns of terrorist violence. Italian authorities believed that Negri himself planned the infamous 1979 kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro, the leader of Italy's Christian Democratic Party. Just before Aldo's execution, his distraught wife got a taunting phone call, telling her that her husband was about to die. The voice was allegedly Negri's. Unable to build a strong enough case to try the philosopher for murder, Italian authorities convicted him on lesser charges of "armed insurrection against the state."

Negri's theoretical work was in keeping with his terrorist activities. He had become the leading voice of Italy's ultra-Left by advancing an inventive reinterpretation of Marx's *Grundrisse* that located the agent of social revolution not among the industrial proletariat, largely co-opted as it was by capitalist wealth and bourgeois democratic freedoms, but among those marginalized from economic and political life: the criminal, the part-time worker, the unemployed. These dispossessed souls, Negri felt, would be far quicker to unleash the riotous confrontations with the state that he saw as necessary to destroying capitalism.

Facing thirty years in prison, and after much legal wrangling, Negri eventually fled to France, where during the mid-1980s he became chums with philosopher Gilles Deleuze and other radical thinkers, lectured at the University of Paris (meeting his American coauthor, Duke literature professor Michael Hardt, who was his student there), and wrote a host of books and essays, including paeans to the "politics of subversion" and a bizarre meditation on St. Francis of Assisi as a proto-Communist.

Then, a few years ago, after nearly two decades in exile, an unrepentant Negri returned to Italy to serve a reduced sentence. The book-jacket claim that he is currently an inmate at Ribibbia is wildly exaggerated. In fact, Negri serves his time under partial house arrest at his lovely book-lined apartment in a tony Rome neighborhood. He must sleep there at night, but he is otherwise free to come and go as he pleases, and regularly receives fawning journalists and academics seeking the master's wisdom.

Negri's criminal past grants *Empire* a veneer of revolutionary authenticity and gives readers predisposed to feel it an agreeable frisson of danger and transgression of bourgeois conventions. Negri "brings with him the glamor of murder," acidly observes writer David Pryce-Jones. Few things are more alluring, he adds, to the armchair radicals of academe and the *New York Times*.

What is the argument, such as it is, of this strange book? For Hardt and Negri, "Empire" is "the sovereign power that governs the world"—a new "capitalist mode of production." It is, more concretely, the global market. At the pinnacle of Empire is the capitalist power par excellence, the nuclear-bomb-wielding U.S., "a superpower that can act alone but prefers to act in collaboration with others." Among those others: the G-8 nations, the Paris and London Clubs for Growth, and various nongovernmental organizations that seek to expand economic exchanges among states. The vertiginous market forces these political and economic bodies have unleashed are destroying the old imperialistic nation-state and creating in its stead a new transpolitical global order where economic considerations trump all other concerns. "In its ideal form," the authors write, "there is no outside to the world market: the entire globe is its domain." Quoting Polybius, Hardt and Negri draw an explicit parallel between the new Empire's continent-spanning reach and Rome's mastery of the Mediterranean world in Antiquity.

Economic globalization, Hardt and Negri assert in Marxoid language, has meant that a handful of rich folks are getting richer and more powerful at the expense of the vast majority, who grow "always more exploited," more abject, more "proletarianized." The new global order claims to promote peace, they charge, but in practice it is "bathed in blood." Any time Empire senses a danger to the circulation of commodities, whether it's Islamic "terrorists" (the scare quotes are Hardt and Negri's) or Mexican revolutionaries, out come the guns and missiles to deal with the threat. Today's Empire, like its Roman predecessor, is a brutal pacifying force.

What makes Empire truly insidious, the authors believe, is that people internalize the ways of life it promotes. Citizens of prosperous liberal democracies only *seem* to be free. In reality, say Hardt and Negri, they are subjects of terrifying "societies of control," consumed completely in the "rhythm of productive practices and productive socialization." Capitalism, in short, creates capitalist men and women, brainwashed automatons buying what the market says to buy and dutifully trudging to work in the "social factory." "The great industrial and financial powers," the authors warn, "produce not only commodities but also subjectivities": individuals whose very "needs, social relations, bodies, and minds" respond to the market's call.

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Yet, all is not lost. Even as Empire seduces, Hardt and Negri hold, it is sowing the seeds of its possible destruction. Gestating within the womb of economic globalization is a "counter-Empire," led by "the multitude"—the authors' stand-in for Marx's proletariat. The multitude are all those that don't fit neatly into the global capitalist economy. Have-nots across the planet, the anti-globalization movement, the L.A. rioters, Latin revolutionaries, inner-city blacks, drug addicts, anti-family women, drag queens, body piercers, Islamic radicals, and anyone else who rejects bourgeois values—together they constitute the nomadic "against-men" of the multitude. Just as the Christians of the late Roman Empire colonized its spiritual universe from within, so the multitude will overcome the new Empire. The political task of the third millennium, the authors believe—they're not vulgar historical determinists, they stress, so political action is essential—will be to help bring this multitude together so that it can forge "an alternative political organization of global flows and exchanges" that "will one day take us through and beyond Empire."

What will this "alternative political organization" look like? Hardt and Negri, like their intellectual godfather Marx before them, remain mostly silent about the post-capitalist world, but they do offer a few provocative hints. Global citizenship will be one key feature. "The cities of the earth will become at once great deposits of cooperating humanity and locomotives for circulation, temporary residences and networks of the mass distribution of living humanity—an end to borders and nations," Hardt and Negri prophesize. A second aspect will be "absolute democracy," in which the multitude directly manages and organizes economic, political, and social life. No more will private property—"a putrid and tyrannical obsolescence"—pit man against man. Free access to and control over "knowledge, information, communication, and affects" will be a matter of course. A final characteristic: equal compensation for all. Hardt and Negri call it a "citizenship income."

The counter-Empire is possible only after modernity—including the universal solvent of global capitalism—has dissolved the certainties of all earlier ages. Hardt and Negri's multitude is a Promethean power, born with the modern age's emancipation of the human will from the moral constraints of religion and human nature. "Today there is not even the illusion of a transcendent God," the authors proclaim. "The mythology of the languages of the multitude interprets the telos of the *earthly* city, torn away by the power of its own destiny from any belonging or subjection to a *city of God*, which has lost all honor and legitimacy." Human nature is a mirage too. We must embrace our "post-human" identities as monkeys and cyborgs, Hardt and Negri aver. "Humanism after the death of Man," the authors call their stark vision of man as demiurge. The multitude represents an "uncontainable force," an "excess of value with respect to every form of right and law." Beyond good and evil, it will "create and recreate" the human world in a "secular Pentecost." Hardt and Negri, dreaming of Communist Supermen, view the American Declaration of Independence and the Marx-inspired revolutions of the twentieth century as anticipatory signs of the coming liberation.

These epochal transformations will require a cleansing bloodletting. "The new barbarians" of the multitude must "destroy with an affirmative violence and trace new paths of life through their own material existence." Hardt and Negri's language bristles menacingly at the multitude's bourgeois enemies: "Who wants to see any more of that pallid and parasitic European ruling class that led directly from the ancien régime to nationalism, from populism to fascism, and now pushes for a generalized neoliberalism? Who wants to see more of those ideologies and those bureaucratic apparatuses that have nourished and abetted the rotting European elites? And who can still stand those systems of labor organization and those corporations that have stripped away every vital spirit?"

The success of *Empire* is astonishing when you cut through the jargon and see exactly what it says. Hardt and Negri fall prey to every destructive error that has characterized radical antibourgeois thought, of the left and right, from Lenin to Heidegger to Foucault to Islamism. Though the book seems on first inspection to be something new, it is really very old news.

Like their radical predecessors, Hardt and Negri fail to think politically—fail to explore the real possibilities and dangers of political reality and take measure of the lessons of history. Though the authors say they want to mine the "dense complex of experience"—a praiseworthy aim for any political thought—a reader of *Empire* will wander through hundreds of pages of arid theory before he encounters a flesh-and-blood political actor or a real decision or historical event or institution. The book, like much contemporary political theory, is inhumanly abstract. The same abstraction was abundantly evident when Hardt appeared on *The Charlie Rose Show*. To the host's commonsense questions, Hardt could only respond in hallucinatory theory-speak. To anyone unfamiliar with the latest academic buzzwords, he sounded like a space alien. Rose seemed—justifiably—completely befuddled.

Inseparable from the failure to think politically, Hardt and Negri, like the rioters endlessly disrupting World Trade Organization meetings, offer no evidence to support their basic charge that economic globalization is causing wide-scale planetary misery. Predictably, this past summer, as the G-8 meeting got underway in Genoa, Italy, the *New York Times* chose these two "joyful"

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Communists to write a lengthy op-ed extolling the virtues of anti-globalization rioters.

The truth about globalization is exactly the reverse of what Hardt and Negri assert. Globalization is dramatically increasing world prosperity and freedom. As the *Economist*'s John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge point out, in the half century since the foundation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the world economy has expanded six-fold, in part because trade has increased 1,600 percent; nations open to trade grow nearly twice as fast as those that aren't; and World Bank data show that during the past decade of accelerated economic globalization, approximately 800 million people escaped poverty.

Needless to say, economic globalization isn't without its downside. As I've argued in these pages (see "Capitalism and the Suicide of Culture," February 2000), it *can*—there's no necessity at work—amplify and disseminate some of the less attractive aspects of today's libertine culture. But on balance, as neoconservative sociologist Peter L. Berger has suggested, the empirical evidence proves it far preferable to any alternative economic order we know of. It has profoundly diminished human suffering.

If Hardt and Negri's depiction of global capitalism is mendacious, their hazy alternative to it—absolute democracy, open borders, equal compensation—is apolitical utopian nonsense. How would such schemes actually work? Hardt and Negri never say. Do they truly think that "annulling" private property and eliminating nations, if it were somehow possible, would be liberating? Wouldn't it lead to a totalitarian increase in political power, as in the old Soviet Union? But then Hardt and Negri seem to look back fondly on Lenin and Stalin's dark regime. "Cold war ideology called that society totalitarian," they complain, "but in fact it was a society criss-crossed by extremely strong instances of creativity and freedom, just as strong as the rhythms of economic development and cultural modernization." To which one can only respond: Have they never read a page of Solzhenitsyn? Moreover, as filled with admiration as Hardt and Negri are toward the Soviet Union, they are contemptuous toward the decencies and the humble—and often not so humble—freedoms of democratic capitalist societies.

Along with this utter failure to look at political reality, Hardt and Negri share another ugly characteristic with Lenin, Franz Fanon, and many other anti-bourgeois thinkers: a totalitarian style of thought that substitutes rhetorical violence for reasoned argument. For Lenin, disagreement with the revolutionary line (as he defined it) was heretical. Differences of political vision or even pragmatic disputes were not open to moderation through debate, as in the liberal democratic tradition, but deserved only insult—and in practice, ruthless elimination. Hardt and Negri's violent verbal attacks on Western capitalists—"putrid," "rotting," "parasitic"—could come right from the pages of *Materialism and Empirocriticism* (or, for that matter, from one of Osama bin Laden's terrifying manifestos). After September 11, the authors' illiberal, terrorist language seems obscene.

Hardt and Negri's contempt for the bourgeois men and women who go to work, attend Mass, raise their kids, and generally live respectable, productive lives is itself contemptible. Who do these two men think they are? How did *they* free themselves from the "society of control" while most of us fritter away our lives, drones in the social factory? *Empire*'s elitism is an updated version of the Marxian notion of a revolutionary vanguard, another terrible idea that helped spawn the political monstrosities of the last century.

Hardt and Negri's final delusion is their cartoon version of the modern world as completely secularized. Tell that to the Islamist fanatics who made bombs out of planes, praying to Allah as they died, or to the friends and relatives of those they killed who have crowded into churches and synagogues seeking meaning and solace for their suffering. For both good and ill, as André Malraux predicted, the twenty-first century clearly will be religious, not secular. Hardt and Negri believe that something decent will arise from their lawless atheism. But why assume justice will prevail from such nihilism, when everything we know from history—the wounded history of the twentieth century above all—says that it results invariably in the law of the jungle? Without morality and the rule of law, the powerful simply feel free to rape and pillage; the weak can only tremble and hide.

Apolitical abstraction and wild-eyed utopianism, a terroristic approach to political argument, hatred for flesh and blood human beings, nihilism: *Empire* is a poisonous brew of bad ideas. It belongs with *Mein Kampf* in the library of political madness.

Do *Empire*'s many fans really believe their own praise? Does *Time* really think it's "smart" to call for the eradication of private property, celebrate revolutionary violence, whitewash totalitarianism, and pour contempt on the genuine achievements of liberal democracies and capitalist economics? Would Frederic Jameson like to give up his big salary at Duke? To ask such questions is to answer them. The far left's pleasure is in the adolescent thrill of perpetual rebellion. Too many who should know better refuse to grow up. The ghost of Marx haunts us still.

For all its infantilism, the kind of hatred Hardt and Negri express for our flawed but decent democratic capitalist institutions—the best political and economic arrangements man has yet devised and the outcome of

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centuries of difficult trial and error—is dangerous, especially since it's so common in the university and media. It seems to support Islamist revolutionary hopes, the increasingly violent anti-globalization movement, and kindred political lunacies. September 11 has reminded us of the fragility of our freedom and prosperity. But the continued influence of the far left, which some mistakenly dismiss as inconsequential, can weaken our collective will to protect ourselves from our enemies. Why fight for a political and social order that is so contemptible?

The journalist Andrew Sullivan, writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, argued that one consequence of September 11's terrorist assault will be to discredit permanently the views of those who, like Hardt and Negri, despise democratic capitalism every bit as much as the Taliban does. I hope he's right, but I'm not so optimistic. After all, *Empire* is the "Next Big Idea" after a century in which more than 125 million people lost their lives because of antibourgeois political movements. A few thousand murdered Americans may not be enough to end the hold the radical left still has on elite culture. FT

Redemption

The angels offered reprieve,
escape for Lot's entire household
including almost-sons who having witnessed
a divine defense of honor
dared to scoff at certain doom.

Commanded in that final moment to depart,
Lot himself paused,
needed to be tugged away
from his destruction—
man caught up in doubts and compromise
the hand of grace dislodged

for him; for us.

What did Lot's wife hope to see
when on that moving day her eyes slid back
to the town where she had raised a family,
exchanged the recipes of substitution . . .

Perhaps she turned to douse with tears
the fire of a hearth where friendship dawdled
near the shame she'd entertained:
in her heart, still burning,
embers of a tolerance

for sin we too have hosted—

her final heedless turning hardened
into destination.

Leslie Goerner

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The End of Magic

Sarah E. Hinlicky

Of a fair evening in the mythical but true world of Middle Earth, towards the end of the Third Age, a young hobbit named Frodo is holding private counsel with Galadriel. She is the queen and lady of Lothlórien, the most secret and beautiful reserve of the Elves. Frodo has been gazing into her Mirror, a shallow basin of silver filled with water from the stream, and there he has seen clouded predictions of the future, terrifying in their uncertainty. But these uncertainties are followed by an absolute certainty, and an unwelcome one at that.

For Frodo, as the bearer of the Ring, the bewitching and irresistible work of the evil Sauron, recognizes on the finger of the Lady Galadriel another Ring—sister to his own, Nenya by name, but not evil. It is one of the three Rings belonging to the Elves, the source of their safety and peace, skill and elegance; yet these Rings are beholden to the one Ring, Frodo's Ring. Therein lies the sad certainty.

"Do you not see now," Galadriel says to Frodo when he has espied the lady's Ring, hidden from the sight of others, "wherefore your coming is to us as the footstep of Doom? For if you fail, then we are laid bare to the Enemy. Yet if you succeed, then our power is diminished, and Lothlórien will fade, and the tides of Time will sweep it away."

Already in this the third of six volumes in *The Lord of the Rings*—J. R. R. Tolkien's much-acclaimed fantasy that twice has been proclaimed the book of the century (admittedly by a self-selecting group of people, Waterstone patrons in Great Britain and Amazon.com users)—the end is near. The end of the Ring bodes well for the future of Middle Earth, unquestionably: the power to conduct unchecked devastation of lands and peoples in pursuit of wicked goals will forever be lost. Sauron, the lidless Eye, will be no better off than an angry orc on an empty stomach. There is no chance that he, or any equal to him, will rise again; evil is no longer concentrated in one deadly place in the land of Mordor.

And yet, just as evil is no longer concentrated, good is forced into diffusion as well. When the final battle has been fought and the Ring dissolves into the fires of Mount Doom, the Elves will pack their remaining treasures and leave in necessary exile from their homes, Lothlórien and Rivendell and all the rest, bastions of the lovely and the right and the kind. With them will go Gandalf, the wizard, whose skills are no longer required as the Fourth Age dawns. So will Bilbo and Frodo, hobbits indelibly marked by the enchantments of the Ring. Their hard-won wisdom belongs to a world governed by magic, but the fulcrum of power in Middle Earth is shifting. It is no longer in the moral certainties and magical assurances of ages past. Now it is in the morally ambiguous governance of men, who shortly will take center stage in the unfolding drama of the planet. The Elves leave for the Grey Havens of their own volition, but the hobbits will be marginalized, the dwarves swallowed up by the earth, and even Tom Bombadil will be seen no more.

For a tale of heroism and virtue, *The Lord of the Rings* is deeply sad. With good reason: all the struggles of the story, all the adventures in a much-loved world, build up to its own abolition. All the same, the ending is inevitable. Magic is too much to maintain. In a world of magic, this Ring—any Ring—is a possibility; an ever-present possibility, a continuing threat and temptation to all its inhabitants, whether bloodthirsty Nazgûl or retiring, domestic hobbits. The Ring is an addiction, a demon, a torment, a granter of favors, a *precious*. It will

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not go away on its own. The world cannot sustain it; the imagination cannot either. And so the magic must come to an end.

When Tolkien took the old-fashioned fairy tale and transformed it into the genre we now call fantasy, he set the standard for all the works that would follow his. All such novels of a literary bent since then (as opposed to the breed of small paperbacks with florid covers that feed off the Dungeons & Dragons market) inevitably involve obeisance to and commentary on the regal tale of the Ring. The medieval-ish feel, the restricted technology, the stringent roles and hierarchies, the battles and the magic, all of these are par for the course in fantasy writing. Strikingly, so is the theme of the end of magic. There is an unmistakable series of parallels to *The Lord of the Rings*' melancholy self-destruction in other fantasy works.

The problem of power is at the core of that self-destruction, and the plots of the various series participate in the same struggles between power and powerlessness that Christians know so well (so well they barely notice them) from their own salvation history. Tolkien's work draws on this heritage, namely in the sacrifice of the Ring, but cannot fully address the problem. Rather, he sets the stage for the expected story of Jesus Christ some thousands of years later. Tolkien does this and succeeds because he knows the limits of his own literary witness. For others with more ambiguous relationships to Christianity, the struggles and their solutions range from the provisionally profound to the shockingly trite, all the while remaining beholden to the death of their own magic.

The Chronicles of Prydain by Lloyd Alexander are the most evidently similar to *The Lord of the Rings* both in content and conclusion. The five books are geared to a younger audience, and the language is rather less flowery. There is, however, an identical concentration of evil in the ultimate enemy of the tale, Arawn Lord of Annuvin, whose armies are forged in the black cauldron, a huge and sulking pot stained with the blood of dead men who have been brought unwillingly back to a life of mindless, memory-less bondage. In the first novel of the series, *The Book of Three*, Arawn's wicked warlord the Horned King meets his end at the hands of Gwydion, one of the several Sons of Don who are charged with guiding Prydain while Arawn is in ascendancy. In the second book, *The Black Cauldron*, the title object is destroyed and Arawn thus thwarted from infinitely expanding his squadron of zombies. In books three and four, *The Castle of Llyr* and *Taran Wanderer*, Arawn bides his time in the background while the true heroes of the tale, Taran Assistant Pig-Keeper and Princess Eilonwy, grow up, develop character from hard experience, and discover that they love one another.

However, the fifth and final book, *The High King*, requires a conclusive battle. Arawn cannot be permitted to go on forever; a confrontation must be engineered. So Dallben, the hermetic wizard whose clipped and enigmatic advice leaves Taran forever uncertain of his place in the world and in the household, turns to Hen Wen, the oracular pig, to give him a prophecy from ash-wood sticks inscribed with magical letters. After a few apparently depressing predictions on their chances of overcoming the Death Lord, the letter sticks explode: the final prophecy is simply too much. And that is because the letter sticks are prophesying their own end, a prophecy that puts an end to prophecy.

Arawn is indeed defeated and Prydain set free. In the final blaze that takes out the enemy, though, the magical instruments that once tilled the land of their own accord are destroyed as well. What is left is but one small book, a book of knowledge, requiring wisdom and patience to be put to any good use. It is not a bad settlement, but it is certainly not magic. And on it goes. The Fair Folk, dwarves with a knack for gems and a talent for turning invisible, seal themselves under the ground and forsake the plights of mortal men. The reigning kings, much like the Elves in *The Lord of the Rings*, retire to their boats and sail across the sea to the Summer Country, a land of no sorrow and no death. With them they take Dallben and all his powers. They also threaten to take Eilonwy, daughter of a long line of enchantresses, until she decides to sacrifice her magic in order to stay with Taran. He himself has inherited the High Kingship of Prydain instead of eternal life in the Summer Country for choosing "a kingdom of sorrow over a kingdom of happiness."

Thus magic ends in Prydain, and in time even Taran and Eilonwy are forgotten by posterity. But where the real story seems to be over in Middle Earth once the magic vanishes, in Prydain the story is only beginning. Interpreting, a long time after the fact, the meaning of the exploding letter sticks, Dallben comments, "It is clear to me now why the ash rods shattered. They could not withstand such a prophecy, which could only have been this: not only shall the flame of Dyrnwyn [the sword] be quenched and its power vanish, but all enchantments shall pass away, and men unaided guide their own destiny."

The final clause is the key. Taran and Eilonwy's adventures through magic to maturity are microcosms of the bigger story of the maturity of the human race: no longer the easy delineation of good and evil embodied in different kinds of wizards, but the knowledge of good and evil running right through every human heart. Prince Gwydion reminds Taran as they are about to part forever, "You have conquered only the enchantments of evil. That was the easiest of your tasks, only a beginning, not an ending. Do you believe evil itself to be so quickly

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overcome? Not so long as men still hate and slay each other, when greed and anger goad them. Against these even a flaming sword cannot prevail, but only that portion of good in all men's hearts whose flame can never be quenched." It is an end to easy answers. The problem of power remains, but its locus has shifted. Magic tells a good story, but it cannot provide the solution.

In *The Dark is Rising* sequence by Susan Cooper, magic is *only* the basis for a good story—and in the end dies of its own irrelevance. The five-book series imagines Merlin, known by the pseudonym Merriman, coming to present-day Cornwall and Wales to see to it that the power of the Dark does not take control of the earth. Assisting him are three siblings, Simon, Jane, and Barney, who start off the quest to find the "Things of Power," ancient items that the Light, the good side, must collect to stave off the Dark. As the sequence presses on, two other boys come to Merriman's assistance: Will, who is an "Old One," a wizard of the Merlin stripe, and Bran, the legitimate son of King Arthur, who at his birth was slipped through time to grow up in a safer century. (Quite ironic.) Again, the efforts of the Light mean at the last a confrontation with, and defeat of, the Dark, and with that magic ends.

Magic, all this time, has had four expressions. The two that most concern humans are the Light and the Dark, and their commitments are fairly obvious. Strangely, though, the story never provides any intrinsic reason as to why one might choose the Light over the Dark. Like the Dark, the Light is concerned with winning over its enemy, but why it should prefer life over death is as baffling as why anyone should choose the Dark at all. There is a curious moral emptiness to the worldview behind the series, perhaps not surprising in a work that is at best condescendingly sympathetic to Christianity. (As told in the second book, *The Dark is Rising*, there are six Signs, each a cross enclosed in a circle, that keep away the Dark; but when the rector comments on what he perceives to be their Christian source, one of the Old Ones replies sternly, "Very old, them crosses are, rector. . . . Made a long time before Christianity. Long before Christ." Thus the rector is dismissed.) The arbitrariness of the moral choices is all the clearer in light of the other two kinds of magic, High and Wild, which are neutral and amoral respectively. Neither Light nor Dark can make any demands on these two whose power is superior. The prerogative of magic supersedes the ideals of goodness; and in the end, it just doesn't work.

The author apparently intuited this herself and was forced to end the sequence sentimentally. The triumphant conquerors on the side of the Light, when the battle is over, prepare to sail away and "have rest, in the quiet silver-circled castle at the back of the North Wind"—remarkably similar to the final voyage of the Elves in Middle Earth and the Sons of Don in Prydain. Arthur invites his son Bran to join him, and Bran (like Taran) finally refuses because of the love he bears for his country and people: "Those bonds are outside the High Magic, even, because they are the strongest thing on earth." Love then is a fifth thing beside the magics, not necessarily related to the Light, which in turn casts doubt on the whole endeavor of the Light. But no matter; the Light fades away with the Dark, the three siblings have their memories wiped clean, and the Old Ones are outmoded. And once again comes the exhortation to go on saving the world now that magic has done its part. Remember, Merriman says, it is "altogether your world now. You and all the rest. We have delivered you from evil, but the evil that is inside men is at the last a matter for men to control. The responsibility and hope and the promise are in your hands—your hands and the hands of the children of all men on this earth. The future cannot blame the present, just as the present cannot blame the past. The hope is always here, always alive, but only your fierce caring can fan it into a fire to warm the world."

This speech, delivered at the end of the fifth novel, *Silver on the Tree*, rings hollow. Suddenly there is an urgent appeal to free will and moral agency after hundreds of pages of pell-mell providence, wizards turning up at the last possible moment, and valuable items snatched away from the Dark in deus-ex-machina tropes. A stirring speech from the ordinary human John Rowlands, who has just discovered his wife Blodwen to be one of the enemy, indicates Cooper's last-ditch attempt at a corrective: "I do not believe any power can possess the mind of a man or woman, Blod—or whatever name you should really be. I believe in God-given free will, you see. I think nothing is forced on us, except by other people like ourselves. I think our choices are our own. And you are not possessed; therefore, you must be allied to the Dark because you have chosen to be." But all of this is patently untrue to the plot of the story: the children have been forced to live up to the destinies delivered to them with an outcome practically assured from the start.

What undoes the sequence, and forces the basically silly ending, is its obsession with power above all else. The Light wins by a superior show of power, and the High Magic can't make its claim on Bran because love is yet more powerful. But there is little if any content to the power, and that, like magic, is unsettling. The only answer is to let both of them dissipate into a pleasant yarn of the past so that the children, and the rest of the human race, can get on with the hard work of getting along.

Philip Pullman, author of the trilogy collectively entitled *His Dark Materials*, denies that he is a fantasy author. Rather, his books are works of "stark realism" illuminated by fantastic elements (as Daniel P. Moloney

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notes in his deadly accurate review in these pages, May 2001). The fantastic elements are easily integrated into the ordinary life of Lyra's world and plenty of other parallel universes, if not our own: witches, subtle knives, alethiometers, archangels, and specters all have their place without the slightest self-consciousness about their magical properties.

But the trilogy's conclusion imitates, in an odd and truncated sort of way, the other fantasies considered here. The heroine Lyra is prophesied from the beginning to be "the end of destiny" in her role as the new Eve. Here it means the long-overdue disintegration of God the Authority and the defeat of Metatron the killjoy angel—no more dictation from on high of the fates of men below. Yet this happy victory necessitates an unhappy ending (for reasons not entirely clear): the subtle knife, which cuts passageways between the universes, must be broken once and for all and its windows permanently closed. No more adventures, but no more bad guys (or gods), either.

Predictably enough, the conclusion is absurdly moralistic. Now that the persecuting church has been subdued and hell emptied out, sentient beings are free, and not just free but obliged, to pursue the Republic of Heaven, Pullman's embarrassingly anticlimactic solution to his trilogy's dilemma. On the last page of the last book, Lyra muses to her daemon Pantalaimon that the *Kingdom* of Heaven is blessedly finished, so now all the people can devote their energies to this life on this earth rather than worrying about the next. And it entails, she realizes in a convenient flash of insight, being "all those difficult things like cheerful and kind and curious and patient, and we've got to study and think and work hard, all of us, in all our different worlds." This goes well beyond the philosophical fallacy of deriving an "ought" from an "is." It's deriving an "ought" from an "isn't."

The problem of *His Dark Materials* is the same as that of *The Dark is Rising*: power, in itself, is the ultimate good. The winners are the ones with the most power, and so they (and their author) can define their goals as righteous. Power is not forsaken but democratically distributed, and the excesses of power in pursuit of that distribution are never seriously addressed. The disturbing questions that remain are quietly covered over in the name of the brotherhood of all mankind. The knife is broken and then it's back to the age-old conundrum of how we live together. It is deliciously ironic, though, that a series so determined to disprove original sin is forced at the end to demonstrate its unassailable existence with a concluding ethical plea.

The *Earthsea* series by Ursula K. LeGuin is the most morally and metaphysically sophisticated post-Tolkien fantasy series to date. In Earthsea, magic is not a set of esoteric spells reserved to the learned few or a clever manipulation of the elements, but the logical outcome of the entire society's distinction between true names and use names. In the beginning, Segoy the creator raised the islands from their watery depths, sang life into being, and gave every single thing its true name. Dragons kept the original language of the making and the nonmoral freedom that accompanies it. Humans chose created language, discovered the ability to lie, and found themselves yoked to the knowledge of good and evil. During the time in which the five Earthsea novels take place, the only humans who know the true names of things are the wizards that study on the island of Roke, along with, here and there, strange and smelly women who know just enough true words to cast love potions and finding spells, earning themselves the title of witches.

In none of the five books is there a grand and mighty enemy looking to overtake the planet and impose his death and devastation on it. That is a great strength; the moral struggles are far more subtle in Earthsea than in other fantastical lands. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that LeGuin based the magic and morals of Earthsea on the Chinese nontheistic philosophy of Taoism, which above all stresses balance and inaction. Ged, the wizard and main character throughout the stories, has the power to change a pebble into a diamond: but power of itself, as he learns first on Roke and then in his own ordeals, is not enough to justify the change. The first book, *A Wizard of Earthsea*, recounts Ged's catastrophic release of a devastating shadow into the world during a self-aggrandizing act of needless wizardry. The source of the evil is not outside himself but within, and the shadow's power against him is defeated only when Ged names the shadow with his own name and thus tames it. In this act he learns that he himself is dark, fallen (to borrow Christian language), prone to evil and in need of restraint. The second book, *The Tombs of Atuan*, also narrates a rejection of power: this time, that of the silent and greedy powers of the earth that ritually devour Tenar, an unwilling priestess.

Oddly, after such a brilliant start, the third book of the series, *The Farthest Shore*, builds up beautifully and then, unexpectedly, falls flat. The story is in large part a polemic against eternal life along the same lines as *His Dark Materials*: defending the value of this-worldly concerns, scoffing at human life extended indefinitely. It also comes closest to having a real external enemy, the shamed wizard Cob, who above all wants to avoid death. This he achieves (though one is never quite sure why) by ripping a tear in the land of the dead through which the lifeblood of the living drains out. The moment of death never comes for him or those who hand over their lives to him: instead eternal death, silent and mindless, intrudes upon the living. They forget their names, their memories, and their magic, but their bod-

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ies never decay and they never cross over into the land of the dead. In other words, LeGuin is saying, eternal life and eternal death are the same thing.

But her solution is utterly unsatisfying. Ged manages to close the gap that Cob has opened and set the balance between life and death right again—another Taoist theme. Death must be accepted as the flip side to life. But death is still death, silent and mindless. Whether its onset is delayed forty years or so matters little. Both Ged and his companion Lebannen have seen the land of the dead, how it goes on forever, how the dead walk around empty and soulless. It is really not balanced at all; the solution is in fact no solution. And it takes a terrible toll on Ged: in the process of closing the gap, he uses up all his power. He still knows the true names of things, but they no longer obey at his summons.

The problem of death takes some time to work out, so a full eighteen years passed until *Tehanu: The Last Book of Earthsea*, which was in fact not the last book of Earthsea, was published, taking a tentative stab at the problem. It is approached, once again, by the relinquishing of power. In *Tehanu*, the story begins and is dominated not by the men of the previous three—wizards who control the weather and the names, kings who control the pirates and the ports—but two women, Tenar of *The Tombs of Atuan*, now a widow of a respectable life and her priestess days nearly forgotten, and Tehanu, an abused, burned, abandoned child. Tenar and Tehanu are the weak ones of society, lacking strength or authority, and without the means of deriving either from men by marital or sexual arrangements. In time they are joined by Ged—the magic-less Ged—who also has entered the ranks of the weak after spending his whole adult life the most powerful wizard in the world. The advent of Tehanu, she who is found to be the daughter of dragons and fire, signals a new age dawning in Earthsea. What it all means is left enticingly unclear, but the established wizards of Roke look to her, once banned from their halls because of her womanhood, to explain the changes unraveling the conventional fabric of their world, and to teach them that their mortal enemies, the dragons, are in fact their closest kin.

In late 2001, the last-last book of Earthsea, *The Other Wind*, finally resolves death, power, and ethics. The secret of "Vedurnan" breaks open, the agreement once upon a time to separate those who became dragons and those who became humans. The king reports the ancient tale: "The human beings went east, the dragons west. The humans gave up their knowledge of the Language of the Making, and in exchange received all skill and craft of hand, and ownership of all that hands can make. The dragons let go all such things. But they kept the Old Speech." In wizardry, however, the humans breached the contract. They regained knowledge of the original language and used it to create the land of the dead in the western province of the dragons, visited by Ged and Lebannen in *The Farthest Shore*. The land of the dead is a lie: it is neither the immortality of dragons free of both possessions and morality, nor is it the reentry into the earth and reincarnation of the people in the far eastern reach of Earthsea where wizardry has always been accursed. It is not even properly death, for it refuses to accept its limits. It cannot have it both ways: it must be either limitless power (dragons) or right and wrong (humans). And so the humans do the right thing, as they are wont to do; they break down the wall around the land of the dead and watch the souls dissipate into the air, in an astounding parallel to Pullman's harrowing of hell. Once again, dragons take to the west, humans to the east, but this time, ne'er the twain shall meet.

Fantasy's task and trouble alike is power. The word itself derives from the Greek *phantazein*, to make visible, and so the genre at its best—as Pullman rightly understands—brings to light the starkly real problems of the human race, its quest for control over itself and others. The difficulty is that, once having exposed (however brilliantly) the dilemma of power, magic can offer no solution. Magical cures to sinful ills reduce themselves to absurdity. Power arrives to solve one moral dilemma, but only succeeds in creating another. The best magic can do is quench itself and, as the flame dies out, exhort its readers to righteous civilization among peoples and nations. For this reason, fantasy can pose no real threat to true faith (as some have suspected)—it will always exhaust itself long before arriving at religion.

The perpetual weakness of the genre is its inability to maintain the paradox of goodness and power. In fantasy literature, one of the two has to be dispensed with, and in the end it is always power, in the form of magic, because no author will sanely forsake goodness. But the goodness quickly turns to moralism, as far too many fantasies prove. For the characters, the end of the story means the inauguration of the new, moral way of governance, sentimentally appealing; for the readers, it is a dreary return to the same old thing. The impulse to sacrifice power is true and right—shown most meaningfully in the decision (in *The Lord of the Rings*) to destroy the Ring instead of using it against Sauron—but its aftermath leaves even the best storyteller at a loss.

In other words, fantasy passes the torch. Logically, though, the outcome is not the noble moral struggles of men and women, but the fast-approaching quandaries of science and its literature, science fiction, already hinted at in the fate of the Shire at the end of *The Lord of the Rings*. And if anything, in science fiction it is not

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science that dies (in supposed parallel to magic), but the people who control or fail to control it.

In this light, it becomes clear why *The Chronicles of Narnia* had no choice but to end in eschatology. In the most explicitly Christian of any fantasy series, the charmingly non-modern countries of Narnia, Archenland, the Lone Isles, and all the rest had to escape before someone figured out how to make an internal combustion engine—a clear threat from the Calormenes in *The Last Battle* who had no qualms about chopping down the talking trees to serve their technological purposes. Instead of that horror, Aslan made a door from the shadowland Narnia to his own country—happily a bigger and better Narnia—where magic is utterly beside the point, goodness reigns, power is unnecessary, and so, thank heavens, is electricity.

The gospel, fantastical to some, story regardless, is a progressively heightened challenge to the conventions of human power. The Pharisees, the Zealots, and the Romans jockey for position over and against the protagonist who, though born in a manger and invading the city on the back of a donkey, poses an inexplicably terrifying threat. This is strange. They are terrified of the one who among his own in Nazareth could perform no miracles because of their unbelief, who gives good wine to those too drunk to appreciate it. He promises the earth to the meek (disturbing) yet walks an extra mile and gives away his shirt. He disappoints the devil by leaving the stones uneaten and keeping back from the edge of the cliff—he even turns down the offer of all the worldly kingdoms—but still the Romans worry about him. The Pharisees are unsettled, yet the only sign he delivers them is the sign of Jonah. And the Zealots are concerned that he plans to deny himself and lose his life.

Throughout, proofs are refused; miracles, the "magic" of the Gospels, conceal more than they reveal; that Jesus is the Messiah remains a guarded secret. At the end, the thieves on the adjoining crosses taunt Jesus to save himself and them too: let his power supersede their fate. He doesn't. He dies. And in his death "it is accomplished." The great wizards of fantasy are models of restraint (Dallben in Prydain, Gandalf in Middle Earth, Ogion and later Ged in Earthsea), but in the end they justify the use of power. Its use spells their end. The Christ, however, relinquishes all power. He outstrips the demands of the law and its unstable efforts at peacekeeping by his descent into hell. In his powerlessness, true power finds him on Sunday morning and raises him from the dead.

Paul, undone by the mercy of those whom he persecuted, interprets this quandary that remains inaccessible to human notions of power. The man who was also God, he proclaims in Philippians 2, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, and so he humbled himself, taking the form of a slave. The slave is the one whose name is praised over every other name; the crucified with everlasting holes in his hands is the lord of life. This foolish pattern of God's is wiser than human wisdom, and this weakness is stronger than human strength, and in every case the former brings the latter to shame. As it was for the Son of God, so it must be for the human race, always aspiring to be the noisy gongs and clanging cymbals of the universe in pursuit of prophetic powers and all mysteries and all knowledge. The prophecies and mysteries and knowledge avail nothing, but they are not willingly relinquished. Their spell is too strong. Power for its own sake is the original and ongoing temptation.

The end of the enchantment of the human race, then, cannot be its own willing sacrifice of power (which never happens), nor its entry into the mature solution of conflict aided by a little love and understanding (which fails cruelly every time). The end of magic resides in the death of the highest power of all on the cross. This power is demonstrably not power for its own sake. Its solution rejects both godly privilege—something Pullman has never understood about Christianity—and legal right in favor of self-giving love and obedience. This power is welded with goodness and both lead to the resurrection of the dead, a community where the paradox ceases to be a paradox any longer.

The Arthur legends understand this truth better than any other fantastic myth. T. H. White's telling in *The Once and Future King* recounts the struggle between Might Makes Right and Might For Right, the latter, naturally, being the dream of the young idealistic Arthur. He has great plans for his knights and nation and strives towards them energetically, driven on by faith and chivalry. And yet, sadly, he fails all the same. He is undone by his own mistakes, by treachery and heartbreak, by stubborn human resistance to Right that even the highest ideals and noblest souls fail to overcome. The one hope he might have to set his errors right again is Merlyn—and Merlyn, the greatest magician in history, fails too. While Arthur meets his death and sails (once more on a boat) to the vale of Avalon to await a better kingdom, Merlyn is lured and captured by Nimue, his magic tucked safe away inside a cave until the time of his own liberation. Even *his* magic ends. And there he will stay until the day of redemption, beyond men and magic alike. FT

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Books In Review

Off Center

Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity. By Darrin M. McMahon. *Oxford University Press. 262 pp. $35.*

***Reviewed by* Damon Linker**

As everyone knows, Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* is filled with valuable observations about the United States. America's unprecedented social equality, its freedom, its vibrant intermediary institutions, even its volatile racial situation—all of these subjects are treated with a depth and subtlety that have yet to be surpassed. And then there is Tocqueville's revealing, and less frequently noted, discussion of the surprising relationship between Enlightenment and Christianity in America. The United States is a country, he claims, that combines widespread Enlightenment with a deep and abiding faith in God. Just as, for Americans, "it is the observance of divine laws that guides man to freedom," so it is that "religion . . . leads [him] to Enlightenment."

In Tocqueville's native France, as throughout much of the European continent, things were very different. Since the early seventeenth century, the age-old ideals of civilization and intellectual Enlightenment had been employed as weapons in an ideological campaign. While many thinkers continued to seek knowledge for the same reasons philosophers had pursued it for millennia—for its own sake, in order to glorify God, to satisfy human curiosity—others had a different aim. Such figures as Hobbes, Spinoza, Bayle, Locke, Voltaire, Diderot, Helvétius, La Mettrie, d'Holbach, Rousseau, Condorcet, and many others—Europe's first intellectuals—wanted above all to use recent scientific discoveries to inspire skepticism about the truth of the Christian religion, and thus to undermine its spiritual authority. To be sure, not all of these writers went as far as Voltaire's *Écrasez l'infâme!* Some, like Locke and Kant, wanted merely to reform, or liberalize, Christianity. (At least Protestant Christianity. For Locke, Catholics, like atheists, must not even be tolerated.) Yet their program of Enlightenment was based on a series of deeply anti-Christian and even antireligious assumptions.

For the vast majority of the philosophes, orthodox religious belief was inspired by nothing nobler than ignorance and fear. Lacking knowledge of the true causes of events within the world, most people live their lives in a terror that can be diminished only by embracing comforting superstitions. This situation—which, according to the leading figures of the Enlightenment, prevails whenever and wherever people lack knowledge of the natural world—was made considerably worse in Europe by the presence of a class of clergy who claimed to possess esoteric knowledge that entitled them to rule the ignorant and fearful masses. Genuine Enlightenment thus requires both that intellectuals dispel superstition by popularizing the findings of modern science and, even more importantly, that they use a potent combination of reason and rhetoric to discredit the Church's claim to rule in spiritual matters. (When it comes to the issue of whether the Enlightenment relied more heavily on reason or rhetoric in its battle with orthodoxy, it is useful to recall Gotthold E. Lessing's comment that the philosophes didn't so much refute religion as attempt to laugh it into submission.)

More than three centuries after it began, the assault on the Church in the name of antireligious Enlightenment has been quite successful. England, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland—today these are more or less secular societies. As Tocqueville noted, the situation has been somewhat different in America, where, for much of our history, Enlightenment has not been defined in opposition to religious faith. But even in the United States, latter-day philosophes have come to dominate the universities and other cultural institutions whose task it is, among other things, to chronicle the past. No wonder that throughout the contemporary West the intellectual and social history of modernity is so often told from the standpoint of those who sought to stamp out religious orthodoxy. Reading the leading histories of the period, one hardly hears that there was another side to the story. Even so-called postmodernists, who claim to champion the "marginalized," have not stooped to examine the writings of those figures, both clerical and secular, who stood up for the Church in its battle with its harshest critics.

Darrin M. McMahon's *Enemies of the Enlightenment* is thus an extremely important book. While a handful of scholars have followed the lead of Isaiah Berlin in studying the ideas of such important Catholic Counter-Enlightenment theorists as Joseph de Maistre, Louis Bonald, and François René Chateaubriand—each of whom established himself as an important social thinker in the wake of the violence of the French Revolution—McMahon is more ambitious. Recognizing that many of the ideas of these thinkers were prefigured in the polemical writings of men and women who attempted to defend the Church in the decades before the

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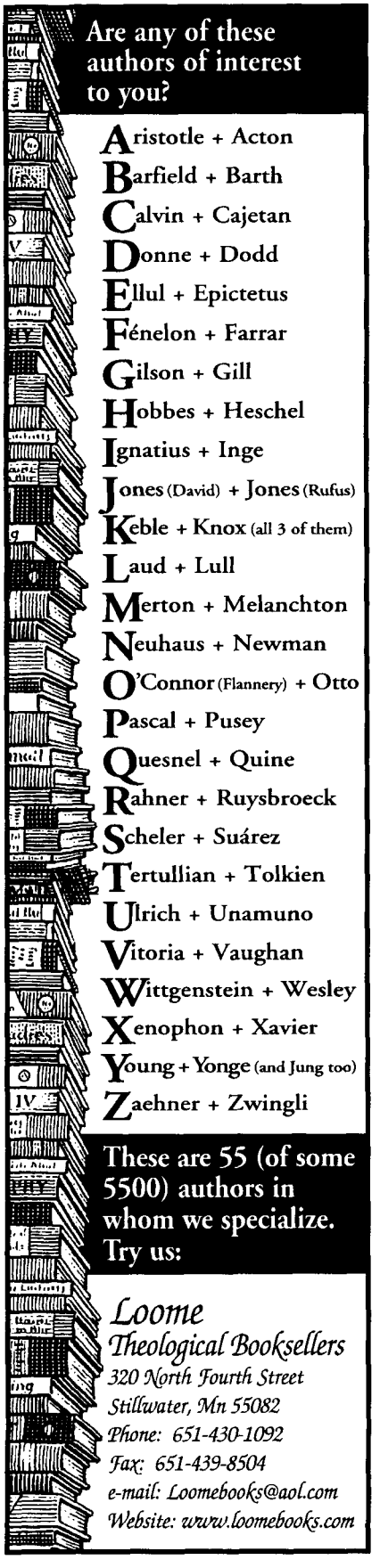

Revolution, McMahon begins his story of the French Counter-Enlightenment in the mid-eighteenth century, with such long-forgotten pamphleteers as Nicolas-Joseph-Laurent Gilbert (1750-1780), Madame de Genlis (1746-1830), and Philippe-Louis Gérard (1739-1813). Years before the ghastly excesses of the French Revolution, these authors warned that the Enlightenment (in McMahon's words) "augured regicide, anarchy, and the annihilation of religion."

By the time McMahon has moved beyond the writings of these and many other individuals from the pre-Revolutionary period to examine Counter-Enlightenment literary productions during the Terror, the Empire, the Restoration, and the Bourbons' final downfall in the revolution of 1830, the reader has come to know scores of obscure characters as well as witnessed the emergence of dozens of ideas that, to this day, constitute the modern "right-wing vision" of the world. McMahon summarizes the elements of this vision as follows. It includes an emphasis on

> the importance of religion in maintaining political order, . . . the perils of intellectual and social license, the valorization of the family and history, the critique of abstract rights, the dangers of dividing sovereignty, and the need for a strategic alliance between throne and altar.

While certain of these elements have dropped out over the years—the spread of democracy has, for example, meant less focus on the crucial importance of monarchical institutions—the right continues to adhere to roughly the same set of "mutual assumptions" and "postulates" that were first articulated in France over two centuries ago.

If McMahon had merely traced the lineage of these ideas back to forgotten figures of the ancien régime, his book would be a significant work of scholarship. But he attempts much more than this. McMahon intends his book to be a contribution to understanding the character of "modernity," above all in Catholic countries, but also much more broadly, in Christian and even non-Western cultures.

For all of the appeals to the past among the anti-philosophes, McMahon maintains that they brought into being something "distinctly new." As he writes, the Counter-Enlightenment's "defense of tradition was not traditional, its reverence for history was a historical departure, and its arguments for the family and patriarchal power were a response to novel threats both real and perceived." That is, in McMahon's view, the very act of defending norms, practices, and beliefs that previously had been taken as givens ended up generating an entirely novel ideological position. Moreover, the "polemicists of the right" pushed their agenda "by direct participation in the new public sphere, also a uniquely modern product." Hence, contrary to the antimodern motivations of the anti-philosophes themselves, the Counter-Enlightenment must be considered a thoroughly modern movement. And despite the assumptions of many of today's nouveau-philosophes, the modern era must be understood less as a period of progressive secularization than as one characterized by a "developmental struggle" between the forces of Enlightenment and "the oppositional movements it brought into being."

This is a provocative thesis, and one worthy of serious reflection. Conceiving of modernity as an ongoing contest between Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment leads McMahon to the intriguing conclusion that today's "culture wars" have been a permanent feature of modern life from the beginning. Going further, he offers a word

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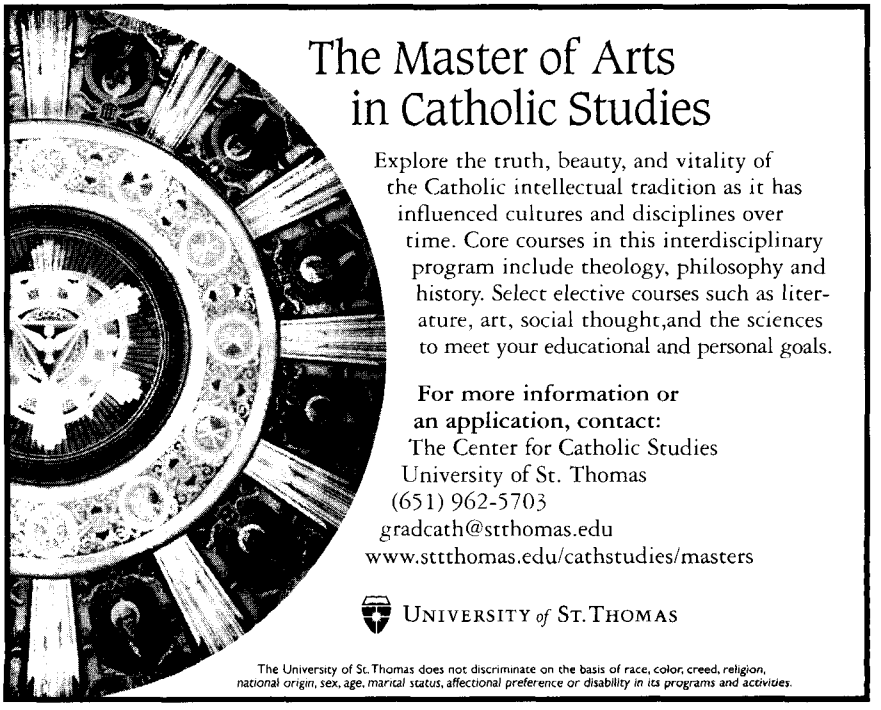
of caution to those inclined to contribute to the struggle on the right side of the battlefield. McMahon argues that the conservative impulse to defend religious orthodoxy against Enlightenment tends to produce, by a kind of inexorable logic, a reactionary ideology that is at least as radical as its secular Enlightenment antagonist.

Though McMahon's explanation of this latter point is less clear than we might have hoped, the danger apparently follows from the right's tendency to accept the Enlightenment's interpretation of modernity as homogeneously secular—and, as a result, to seek its complete overthrow. But since, in McMahon's view, modernity is itself constituted by the conflict between Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment, this counterrevolutionary effort is ultimately futile. And that very futility can inspire a degree of desperation that is compatible with political extremism of various forms, as reactionary forces come to embrace any political movement that holds out the (impossible) hope of routing modernity once and for all.

WHAT, THEN, WOULD McMahon have us do? The question is not as inappropriate as it might seem. While a work of scholarship need not, and often ought not, seek to offer practical political guidance, *Enemies of the Enlightenment* leaves its readers feeling somewhat perplexed about what the author's interpretation implies about the daunting social, political, and cultural questions raised by the persistent conflict between the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment. For the most part, the book floats high above such issues, looking down on them from a position of detachment. *Does* a healthy politics require a religious foundation? *Is* unlimited social and intellectual license compatible with the common good? *Are* families endangered by a generalized decline in respect for authority? McMahon refuses to answer such questions because he is led by his argument to claim that this very way of posing the questions reflects a Counter-Enlightenment bias. It is, he asserts, a mark of the anti-philosophes to adopt a "Manichean" outlook that divides the world "between good and evil, right and wrong, right and left." To propose an answer to these questions would be to take sides in the very debate he wishes to assess disinterestedly.

McMahon thus portrays himself as a partisan of the center, and invites us to join him there. But can his center hold? We have reason to doubt it. While he never takes up an explicit defense of the Enlightenment against its critics, he does repeatedly claim that the Counter-Enlightenment's view of the philosophes as atheistic hedonists bent on undermining religious and political order, authority, and tradition is a "construction" that "distorts" their actual positions. Yet, at other points, he admits that such views "were not arbitrary." Indeed, he points out that many of the philosophes denied that "egotism, ambition, vanity, and covetousness" were vices. Moreover, they "almost uniformly reject[ed] the view that human nature had been vitiated by the Fall." Their hostility to Catholic "prudery" inspired them to "spice their works with ample lubricious material as well." Citing two examples from the many others that could be adduced, he notes that "the dreamer of Diderot's *Rêve de d'Alembert*... interrupts a disquisition on materialism to masturbate in the presence of his hostess, . . . and *Les Bijoux indiscrètes* blurs the lines between pornography and *philosophie* even further, centering the story's action around two talking vaginas."

And still McMahon maintains that "the majority of anti-philosophe accusations were vastly overstated and grossly unfair." Such statements are, to put it mildly, unconvincing. McMahon's own examples make it abundantly clear that, in fact, the philosophes and their critics were in considerable agreement about the character and content of the liberationist aims of the Enlightenment. What led to passionate disagreement between them was a dispute about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whether those aims were compatible with the common good and human happiness.

DESPITE HIS EFFORTS to remain above the fray, McMahon is clearly on the side of the French Enlightenment. He has, for instance, comparatively little to say about how "vastly overstated" and "grossly unfair" were the philosophes' original attacks on religion and its place in human life. Likewise, rather than crediting the early anti-philosophes with at least a modicum of insight for predicting that the influence of the Enlightenment would lead France to be "engulfed by horrors," McMahon simply dismisses their warnings as hyperbolic extremism. Thus, even if his ostensibly evenhanded study of the Counter-Enlightenment does not actively defend the cause of the philosophes, it does have the practical effect of furthering the Enlightenment's agenda by discrediting its critics.

This is unfortunate. The last thing we need now is a tacit apology for the aggressively secular Enlightenment that dominated France in the eighteenth century and permeates our universities and institutions of higher culture today. And neither do we need another attack on the Counter-Enlightenment forces that (in many cases, understandably) overreacted in an attempt to defend religion against the secularist onslaught.

What we do need is to recognize that the experience of Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment in France (and on the European continent more generally) tells us less about the character of "modernity" as such than it does about one way—and not a particularly felicitous way—that the relation between knowledge and religion can be conceived in modern times. As Tocqueville noted, there is another possibility. The American experience—at least until the mid-1960s—demonstrates that Enlightenment and religion need not be antagonistic. Indeed, they can nurture one another. What we need today, above all, is to understand how to recapture and sustain this symbiotic relationship. And this is a project to which McMahon's book, as informative and meticulously researched as it is, has precious little to contribute.

Case for the Prosecution

THE POPES AGAINST THE JEWS: THE VATICAN'S ROLE IN THE RISE OF MODERN ANTI-SEMITISM. By DAVID I. KERTZER. *Knopf. 355 pp. $27.95.*

***Reviewed by* William D. Rubinstein**

PROBABLY THE BEST-KNOWN aspect of the uneasy relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people in modern times was the behavior of Pope Pius XII during the Holocaust, a subject of endless debate. Students of modern anti-Semitism also recall other incidents of Catholic hostility towards the Jews—the Mortara case (the kidnapping and forced baptism of a Jewish infant in Bologna in 1858), the behavior of many French Catholics during the Dreyfus affair, the association of some Catholic intellectuals and priests with the extreme

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right in Europe in the period of "modern" anti-Semitism from 1870 to 1945. Nevertheless, there has until now been no general history of Catholic hostility to the Jews in modern times which argues for the importance of the Catholic Church, especially the Vatican, in engendering modern forms of anti-Semitism.

This gap is not coincidental. Modern "racial" anti-Semitism, emphasizing the ethnic separateness and evil of Jews in European societies, has always been distinguished from premodern forms of anti-Semitism, which were religious in nature, founded in the rejection by Jews of the divinity of Jesus. Although there is widely admitted to be some overlap between the two, post-1870 racialist anti-Semitism, culminating in the Nazi Holocaust, is also almost always seen as categorically different from previous varieties of anti-Semitism, often anti-Christian and "pagan," and founded in social Darwinist pseudoscience and national xenophobia.

It is the argument of David Kertzer's *The Popes Against the Jews* that there was less difference between the two forms than has previously been understood. The author argues for a consistent pattern of Catholic, indeed direct Vatican, involvement in engendering modern forms of anti-Semitism. Professor Kertzer focuses on events that are well-known, such as the Mortara case and the Dreyfus Affair, and on aspects of this question that are less well-known, such as the Church's response to "ritual murder" charges (the absurd claim, first advanced in the Middle Ages, that Jews murder Christian children at Passover in order to use their blood to bake *matzoh*) and the thoroughgoing anti-Semitism of much of the Catholic press. Prof. Kertzer skillfully and not unsubtly traces the differences in attitude towards the Jews among the Popes between about 1740 and 1940.

ALTHOUGH AN EXCELLENT and well-written piece of historical research, *The Popes Against the Jews* goes out of its way to magnify the role of anti-Semitism within the Catholic Church. Indeed, it greatly magnifies the importance of the Jews for the Church, and compounds this by viewing every aspect of the Church's attitude towards the Jews with post-Holocaust eyes. During the previous 1200 years or so—to the Church, a century or two is a short period of time—the Church had lost the entire Middle East and north Africa to Islam, nearly all of eastern Europe to Orthodox Christianity, and much of northern Europe and its outposts overseas, the most economically advanced portion of the world, to Protestantism.

Since the eighteenth century, moreover, it faced the entirely new threat of secularism in the guise of often rabid anticlericalism and explicitly anti-Catholic socialism and atheism. Compared with these threats to its position and, often, to its existence, the Jews were thought by the Church to pose little to no danger.

Viewed with post-Holocaust eyes (and, I might add, with Jewish eyes: Professor Kertzer is at pains to note that he is the son of a rabbi), the attitude of the Catholic Church to the Jews may seem central, but in reality there has never been a time when this was so. Indeed, in premodern Catholic Europe it is striking that the Jews, unlike other non-Catholic groups, were accepted and tolerated. Down to the reunification of Italy, for instance, the four synagogues in Rome were the only non-Catholic places of worship permitted in the city. Indeed, Judaism was the only non-Catholic religion permitted in Catholic Europe and its domains overseas, notwithstanding the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and notwithstanding their marginal status.

In modern times, the Church was engaged in a general antimodernist crusade that never singled out the Jews. Almost without exception, the Church considered other groups to be its main enemies, not the Jews. This was the case even with Church leaders who might well be described as anti-Semitic. For instance, although Professor Kertzer makes much of the linkage in Catholic thought between the Jews and Freemasons (describing the importance of the Masons very well), Freemasonry was regarded as among

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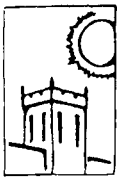

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the Church's main enemies everywhere, even in areas such as Latin America, where there were virtually no Jews but many virulent anticlericalists. It was simply not the case that most Church leaders regarded the Jews and Freemasons as virtually synonymous threats to the Church.

Those individuals in the Church who came closest to making this association—for example, the French Assumptionists at the time of the Dreyfus Affair—were rather unrepresentative figures. The Assumptionists, who published the rabidly anti-Semitic newspaper *La Croix* at this time, were virtually disowned by Pope Leo XIII in 1900. They certainly did not represent Vatican opinion. Prof. Kertzer's handling of this matter illustrates a general tendency in (and weakness of) this work—that is, to blend the attitudes of specific popes towards the Jews with the views of notorious anti-Semites within the Church. There is nothing wrong, of course, with presenting a history of Catholic anti-Semitism, but only if proper distinctions are made between individual Catholics working in the vast Church bureaucracy and the official pronouncements of the Church's leadership.

THE POPES AGAINST THE JEWS ends pointedly with the roundup of over a thousand Roman Jews by the Nazis for Auschwitz. Yet Kertzer never clarifies the connection between the Church's view of the Jews and the Holocaust. Prof. Kertzer understands perfectly well that the resemblances between the attitudes of the Church towards the Jews and Nazi anti-Semitism are extremely minimal, and, indeed, quite rightly takes pains to point out that "the Nazi goal of a racially purified society . . . is clearly contrary to Catholic theology." He also, to his credit, warns us "to be careful not to view history backwards." Most pointedly, he tells us that he does not "mean to suggest that the Roman Catholic Church is alone to blame for the Holocaust. Such a conclusion would be ludicrous." Nevertheless, the author never actually discusses what Nazism owed to the Catholic Church and its teachings, which is, of course, precisely nothing.

Nazism was the systematic policy of expansionist German racial nationalism. Hitler and his minions despised the Church and would have been happy to eliminate it as a force in "Aryan" Europe. Himmler had far-advanced plans to do just that. Since race rather than religion was the sole criterion of value in Nazi eyes, Catholic helot races suffered under Nazi rule as badly as anyone apart

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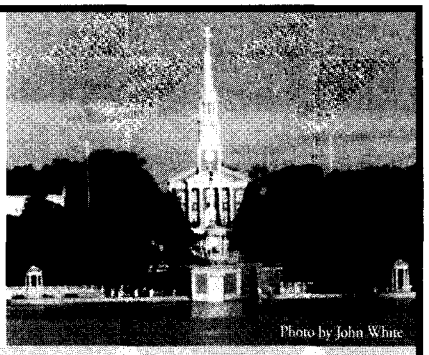
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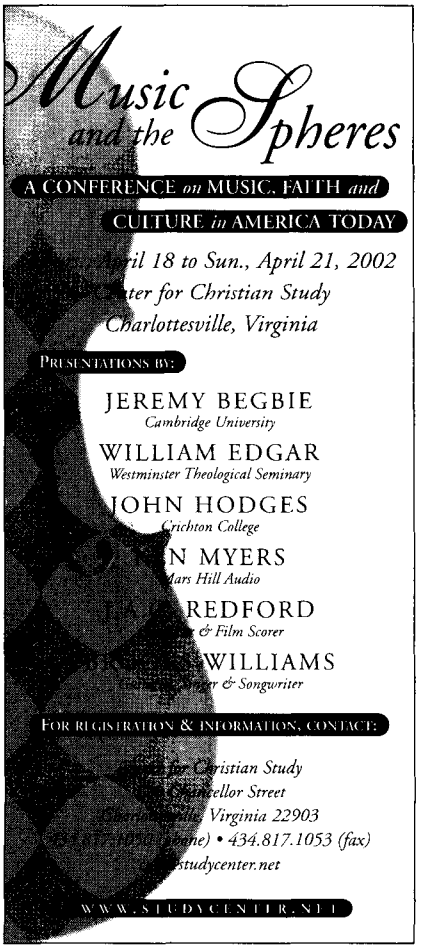
from the Jews, arch-Catholic Poland being the obvious example. While Prof. Kertzer claims that "Hitler himself admitted to being inspired" by the Catholic anti-Semitic Mayor of Vienna, Karl Lueger, there is not one word here about the numerous non-Catholic influences on Hitler, such as Richard Wagner, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and a host of crackpot pan-German ideologues discussed in such works as Brigitte Hamann's outstanding *Hitler's Vienna: A Dictator's Apprenticeship* (1999).

Kertzer accurately notes that a very high percentage of those who took a direct part in the Holocaust (including Hitler himself, of course) came from Austria, "an overwhelmingly Catholic country." But there was an even more basic reason for the high percentage of virulent anti-Semites and racists among the Austrians: the locale of its Germanic population at the gateway to millions of "sub-human" and helot Slavs, Czechs, and Jews in Eastern Europe. It was an ultra-nationalistic ideology that lay at the heart of Hitler's anti-Semitism. Religion had nothing whatever to do with his uniquely evil brand of racial superiority and hate.

Indeed, insofar as the Catholic Church was internationalistic and opposed to secular ultra-nationalism, it represented a direct threat to Nazism. Anyone familiar with *Mein Kampf* knows the venomous hostility Hitler expresses toward the arch-Catholic Hapsburg monarchy, a hatred only slightly less vicious than that which he shows to Jews and Communists. Within independent Austria after 1918, the Catholic-backed Christian Socialist Party, representing traditionalist local Catholicism, was so hated by the Nazis that in 1934 Hitler had its leader, Engelbert Dolfuss, assassinated.

The Catholic Church did not distinguish itself during this period in its attitude towards the Jews, and such affairs as the Mortara case show the Church at its least admirable. But *The Pope Against the Jews* is a one-sided case for the prosecution, distorting the central antimodernist ideology of the Catholic Church in this period into something that it clearly was not.



A Not-So-Radical Alternative

KINGDOM OF CHILDREN: CULTURE AND CONTROVERSY IN THE HOMESCHOOLING MOVEMENT. By MITCHELL L. STEVENS. *Princeton University Press. 238 pp. $24.95.*

***Reviewed by* Charles Glenn**

A RECENT GOVERNMENT report documents a remarkable growth in the number of school-aged children now being educated at home and provides reassuring information about their educational progress. Of the many phenomena in American life that are puzzling to European and Asian observers, this is by no means the least. Home schooling seems like a reversal of two centuries of progress in creating systems of universal schooling.

Are home-schooling parents selfish? A graduate student from Taiwan threw out that challenge recently to my seminar on educational freedom. Shouldn't they keep their children in the public schools and try to make those schools better? Aren't they just running away from the common project of society, to educate the rising generation?

We have heard that challenge before; it is frequently directed at parents who put their children in private or parochial schools, in public charter schools, even in desegregated magnet schools. Of course, those who make the charge of desertion frequently do not have their own children in urban public schools, but they are eager that others do their bit for social justice by sending their children to the front lines.

Even those of us who believe that educational freedom is a fundamental right, and are sympathetic toward faith-based schools, may wonder what inspires hundreds of thousands of parents to educate their children at home when there are so many other alternatives. Why has the number of children not attending any school grown from perhaps fifty thousand in 1985 to a million or more today? Every state now permits children to be educated at home, something which is very unusual if not completely forbidden in other Western democracies.

Mitchell Stevens has some of the answers. He has been talking with home-schooling parents for years, attending their meetings, and observing how they and their children think about and practice education. *King-*

CHARLES GLENN *teaches education policy and history at Boston University.*

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dom of Children shows that, for the most part, they are thoroughly normal people, not social recluses, who come to their commitment to teach their children at home for a variety of reasons.

Understanding home schooling requires disentangling its two primary strands. One is the "de-schooling" movement associated with the late John Holt, Ivan Illich, and other radical critics who, since the 1960s, have insisted that "children have enormous potential for distinctive accomplishments and that standardized ways of educating children temper or even squelch this potential." "My concern," Holt proclaimed, "is not to improve 'education,' but to do away with it, to end the ugly and anti-human business of people-shaping and let people shape themselves." Like Rousseau's Émile, "unschooled" children will find their own way through unstructured exploration.

Home-schooling parents in the John Holt camp also follow Rousseau in adopting a radically optimistic view of human nature uncorrupted by society. Allow a child to follow his own interests, perhaps to focus for weeks or months on a single line of exploration, and authentic learning will occur, unconstrained by adult assumptions about how knowledge and skills should be organized and taught. Adults should avoid imposing their own view of what matters.

Such assumptions about the unconstrained flourishing of human nature are not shared by the other, and now much larger, strand of home schoolers, religiously conservative families. For these families, primarily Protestant but also Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim, encouraging independent work and the personal interests of the child are an important aspect of what home schooling is all about, but they usually insist that this occur within a framework of learning objectives that are often considerably more prescriptive and ambitious than those that public school systems adopt. There are now hundreds of books and websites that offer guidance for the home-schooling parent, and it is possible to sign on with a variety of services and "virtual schools" that will provide curriculum, assessment, and diplomas for children educated at home. Many of these services are packed with ideas for research activities and projects that direct young people toward mastery of a tradition that almost all public and private schools have abandoned.

Both the "unschoolers" and the religiously conservative families seek to shelter their children from many

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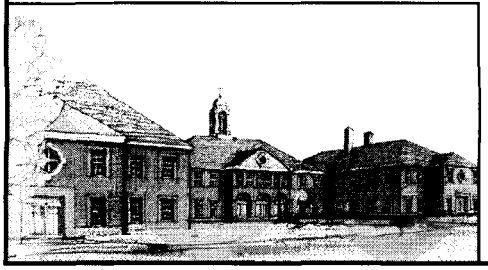

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aspects of popular culture that permeate the media and the shopping mall. They are suspicious of the peer culture that is so profoundly influential in public and even private schools. John Locke, himself an advocate of home schooling, expressed the same concern three centuries ago, writing in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) that "'tis not the waggeries or cheats practiced amongst schoolboys . . . that make an able man, but the principles of justice, generosity, and sobriety, joined with observation and industry, qualities which I judge schoolboys do not learn much of one another. . . . It is impossible to keep a lad from the spreading contagion if you will venture him abroad in the herd and trust to chance or his own inclination for the choice of his company at school."

We would misunderstand home schoolers, though, if we thought that they were seeking to raise their children to be anti-social hermits. In fact, most home-schooled children are engaged in all sorts of activities with other children outside their homes. Last Christmas season, one of my daughters noticed that most of the other young dancers in *The Nutcracker* were home schooled; their flexible schedules made it easy for them to attend the rehearsals, I was told by the young woman in charge, who added proudly that she herself had never been to school a day in her life and was now a college student.

In many cases home-schooling families cooperate with each other to provide instruction in foreign languages and science, and some public school systems now allow children to participate in such subjects, or in extracurricular activities, while otherwise learning outside of school. This generosity on the part of some public school systems may be influenced by their desire to claim these children for purposes of state funding, or by the expectation that at least some of the children will be lured back into the public schools, and some conservative home schoolers regard such initiatives as a dangerous seduction.

IN HIS BOOK, Stevens detects a rather different emphasis between the two primary camps of home-schooling families. He writes:

> As with unschooled kids, the believers' children are loved in all their uniqueness, and their little selves are given con-

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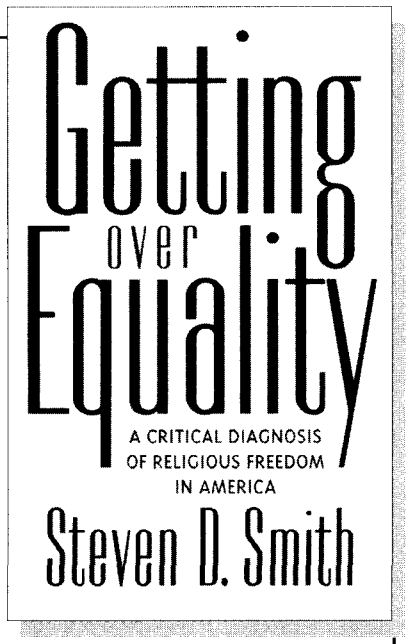

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stant protection and cultivation. But they are also taught early on that their lives will develop in relationship with many others, that individuals will sacrifice some measure of comfort to the group as a matter of course, and that all selves, big and small, must develop within clearly prescribed moral boundaries. . . . Conservative Protestant parents are very willing to talk about imposing limits on their children, and to do so in a language of moral obligation. For a middle-class America increasingly given to accommodating not only the needs but also the desires of its children, the believers offer an instructive dissenting voice.

It would be a mistake to place an exclusive stress on negative motivations. Although many parents who home school are convinced that public schools provide, as Robert Destro has put it, "environments hostile to the beliefs and practices of religiously observant students," it seems likely that most are also attracted to the prospect of being deeply involved with the education of their children. Home schooling is an attractive idea to parents who are reluctant to surrender to strangers the intimate task of nurturing the mind and heart of a beloved child.

Stevens makes the interesting suggestion that this project is especially attractive to women of religiously conservative conviction, who believe that they should make family and home their priority, and yet are sufficiently influenced by the feminist ideas that have filtered through American culture to want to see themselves as having a career. Home schooling offers such a career, though unpaid, and one that is highly valued in religiously conservative circles.

The Taiwanese student in my seminar was answered by an African-American doctoral student who explained how she and her husband, both public school administrators in Boston, had reached the difficult decision to take their two young children out of public school and, after considering home schooling, to enroll them in a Montessori school. The most responsible thing that any parent can do, she insisted, is to raise children who will make the greatest possible contribution to society.

It is clear that hundreds of thousands of home-schooling parents have decided that they should not delegate this responsibility. Despite the adamant opposition of the public education establishment, home schooling appears to be providing children with an effective education, and most selective colleges have no hesitation about admitting them. What seemed, only twenty years ago, to be a radical alternative to traditional schools has become an accepted part of the ever-widening panoply of educational choices.

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The Churches and Israel

Christian Attitudes Towards the State of Israel. By Paul Charles Merkley. *McGill-Queen's University Press. 266 pp. $44.95.*

Reviewed by **Eugene J. Fisher**

Paul Charles Merkley is a professor emeritus of history at Carleton University in Canada, and the author of *The Politics of Christian Zionism, 1891-1948* (1998). Though not a sequel, *Christian Attitudes Towards the State of Israel* picks up where the former study left off, with the birth of a Jewish state in the ancient homeland of the Jewish people, the Land of Israel. The author is an unabashed Christian Zionist, an evangelical who sees the ingathering of the Jewish people, and their miraculous ability to create

Eugene J. Fisher *is Associate Director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.*

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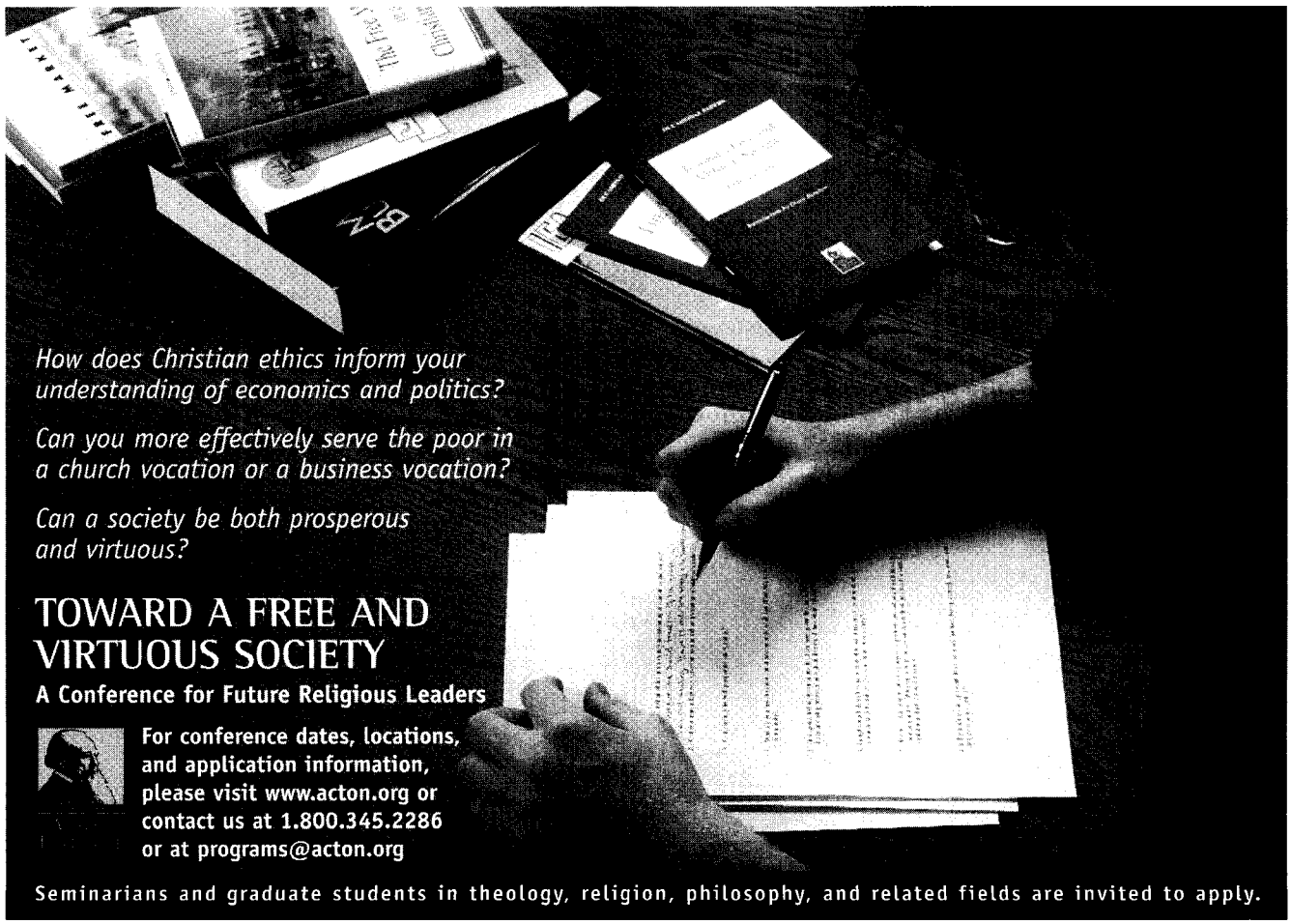
a state after the massive trauma of the Holocaust, as the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Merkley is also a very sophisticated professional historian, a man whose dry wit often comes through in these pages, usually at the expense of liberal Protestantism, and occasionally of his own community. Whether or not one agrees with all his arguments, one cannot but appreciate his fluent prose and the amount of information he so enjoyably conveys.

Despite its broad title, the book focuses on the development of the views of various Protestant denominations regarding the State of Israel. Only one section of twenty-five pages in length is devoted to Roman Catholic attitudes. For the most part, the author simply lumps Catholic and Orthodox Christian attitudes together with mainline Protestant attitudes. He also presumes, in the case of Catholics, that little distinction need be made between the statements and policies of the Holy See before and since the founding of Israel and the attitudes of American Catholics toward Israel over the same period. There is, of course, some justification for this, but also much that is left out by framing things in such a way.

The book is most helpful, I believe, in debunking a wide range of stereotypes about evangelical Christians. It also provides an often incisive critique of the presumptions of liberal Protestantism. As a Catholic who has spent a great deal of time over the past twenty years in dialogue with the latter, I can say that my many good friends in that tradition will doubtlessly appreciate the challenge of Merkley's critique of what he views as their foibles, and will be able to respond to it quite ably on their own terms. As a noncombatant in what is an internal Protestant debate, I can say that I learned a lot from this book about the issues surrounding the State of Israel, theological as well as political, as they appeared among Protestants. In the remarks that follow, I will focus on what the author has to say about Catholic attitudes toward these issues.

Merkley's own viewpoint is that of "Restorationism," by which he means the restoring of a Jewish state to the Land of Israel. Christian Zionists (and he claims there are "tens of millions" of them) see Israel as the result of God's action in history, foretold in the Bible millennia ago. Judging from numerous passages in his book, Merkley would be surprised to find out that many millions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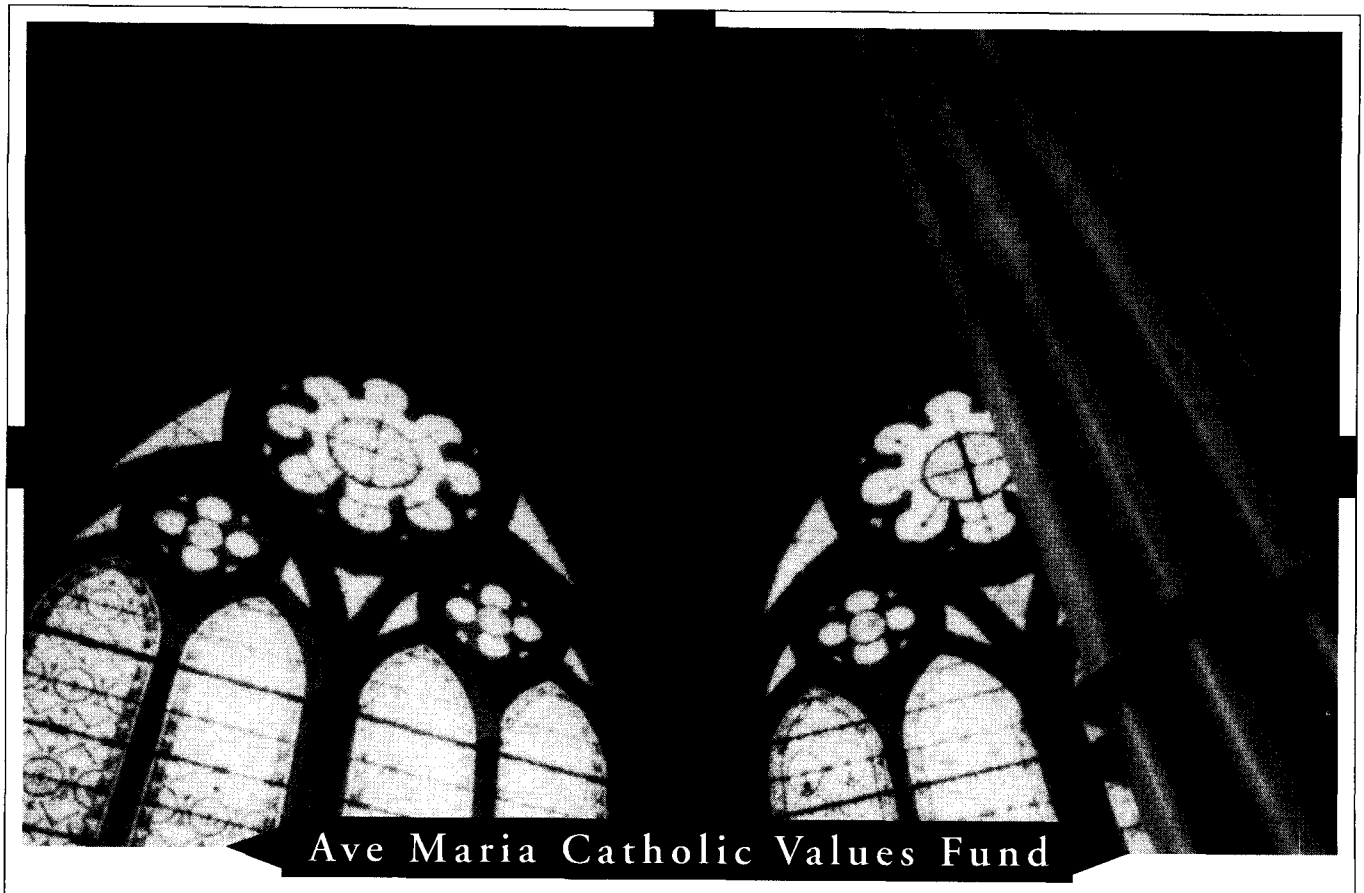

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of Catholics share his view, though with somewhat less certainty and specificity.

Here as elsewhere, much depends on one's attitude toward the Bible. Many evangelicals see in it "predictive prophecy," capable not only of illuminating the past but also of foretelling the future. Many Mainline Protestants and Catholics, by contrast, view prophecy as a source for understanding God's Word as it is meant to guide our inner lives and moral relations with others, not as a source for predicting contemporary political events. While agreeing that the ingathering of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel can plausibly be interpreted as a direct fulfillment of specific biblical prophecies, Catholics tend to take a more cautious approach to the biblical text. This may reflect the Catholic Church's long historical memory of such times as the turning of the First Millennium, when apocalyptic visions based on biblical prophecies caused a great deal of social disorder only to be eventually proven wrong.

MERKLEY'S BRIEF treatment of Catholic attitudes about Israel is fair-minded, though incomplete. He notes Pope Pius XII's positive relations with Jewish leaders, both as Secretary of State and later as Pope. Pius, Merkley writes, showed a consistently "friendly attitude towards Zionists and Jewish Agency figures." Yet Merkley also describes the Vatican's attitude toward Israel as "hostile." This is an interpretation that is, at best, partially accurate. As Merkley himself points out, while the Holy See maintained public neutrality with regard to the UN's partition plan of 1947, it also strongly supported the plan's call for the "internationalization" of the city of Jerusalem (and not just its Holy Places). This was of course at a time when the largest single bloc of nations in the UN represented Catholic countries, especially in Latin America. This group of nations, many of which could have been influenced by the Vatican to vote against partition had it wished to exert its influence, voted overwhelmingly for it, along with its plan to make Jerusalem a *corpus separatum* under international law, a plan that was foiled by Jordan's takeover of the city in 1948. Had these votes gone the other way, the UN resolution would most likely have failed.

Merkley misinterprets, too, the reaction of the Holy See to Israel's taking of Jerusalem in 1967. The language of the Vatican changed, subtly but surely significantly, from supporting an "international status" for the city to endorsing an "international statute" guaranteeing the religious rights of all three Abrahamic faiths. It is this idea of an "international guarantee," by way of an "international statute," which leaves the disposition of the city's sovereignty to negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, a policy which was affirmed in the February 2000 "Basic Agreement between the Holy See and the Palestine Liberation Organization."

Merkley could have considerably filled out his picture of the attitude toward Israel of the American Catholic hierarchy had he undertaken a closer study of its statements on Israel and the Middle East over the years. For example, anyone who has followed the statements of the Catholic bishops, the National Council of Churches, and the mainline Protestant denominations over the years will note a very clear difference among them in style and substance. Whereas Merkley portrays them as equally "hostile" to Israel, the bishops have consistently striven for a balance in perspective, as one can see from the statements of appreciation from both Jewish and Muslim groups over the years. The reason for this is not political. It arises from the sense that there is justice on both sides of virtually all of the issues that make up the complex Israeli/Palestinian equation.

MERKLEY QUITE RIGHTLY points out that "surveys of attitudes conducted by Jewish organizations document the fact that fundamentalism does

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not promote anti-Semitic attitudes—contradicting the myth that still grips the Jewish community in general." But then he engages in some myth-making of his own: "If it is true that most evangelicals generally don't know many Jews, they are certainly better informed about Judaism than are mainstream Protestants and certainly better informed than Roman Catholics." Now I would readily admit that evangelicals tend to know the Bible better than Catholics. But that is quite a different thing than demonstrating the truth of such a gross generalization about sixty-five million American Catholics. For all of the usefulness of Merkley's book, it would have done far more to further interreligious dialogue had the author refrained from inter-Christian simplifications.

The Burdens of Language

TO BEGIN WHERE I AM: SELECTED ESSAYS. By CZESLAW MILOSZ. Edited and with an introduction by BOGDANA CARPENTER and MADELINE G. LEVINE. *Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 272 pp. $30.*

***Reviewed by* Modris Eksteins**

WHO IS CZESLAW MILOSZ? Poet extraordinary, of course, regarded by some as the greatest living poet; Polish-Lithuanian by birth and education, resident since 1960 in the United States; nonagenarian; winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1980. That much we know.

Novelist? Yes, that too. Less well known for his contributions to this genre, but nonetheless justly revered in some quarters for *The Issa Valley* in particular, his lyrical and moving evocation of the landscape and the cultural peculiarities of his Lithuanian birthplace.

Political analyst? Agreed. *The Captive Mind*, his exposition from the early 1950s of the totalitarian temptation in Eastern Europe in the wake of World War II, is generally viewed as a classic, a worthy companion to works by George Orwell, Arthur Koestler, and Hannah Arendt.

But essayist? Who in the English-speaking world knows Milosz as an essayist? The Nobel committee's citation of 1980 noted with regret that his "many-sided essays" had largely been

MODRIS EKSTEINS, *author of* Rites of Spring *and* Walking Since Daybreak, *is a professor of history at the University of Toronto.*

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"overlooked" by the reading public. Alas, little has changed.

Yet here, too, the material abounds, much of it readily available in English—in, for instance, *Beginning With My Streets, Visions from San Francisco Bay,* and, most recently, *Milosz's ABCs.* Still, on this side of the Atlantic the essays have never received the attention accorded his other work. The present volume, *To Begin Where I Am,* is intended to correct that. We are given what the editors call a sampling, a collection of forty-one pieces from a life, most of them previously published in English and easily accessible elsewhere. One of the prominent items here, "Alpha the Moralist," is a chapter central to the much admired *Captive Mind.* Five essays come from *Milosz's ABCs,* which appeared from the same publisher only last year. While seven shorter pieces have been newly translated for this volume, these are—aside from one confessional essay, "If Only This Could Be Said"—relatively minor items.

This, then, is reheated Milosz. The collection has been assembled and edited by two professors of Polish literature, Bogdana Carpenter of the University of Michigan and Madeline G. Levine of the University of North Carolina. Their effort has a touch of academic mountaineering—assaulting Everest yet again, not for its own sake, but to satisfy the manufacturers of climbing gear.

BUT ENOUGH OF this peevishness. Can the world ever get enough Milosz, in whatever form? The simple answer is: No. Milosz reheated is far superior to most of our freshly prepared nourishment. He speaks to all of us, to our confused condition, to our humanity, and to our need. He, representative man and Old Testament prophet rolled into one, speaks from experience across the borders of time and place, with a blend of passion and intellect. He, Protean creature, polymath, poet-historian, philosopher-critic, man of indeterminates, addresses us on all the important issues—history, evil, faith, art—with a sensibility and compassion at once all-embracing and humble.

Grandfatherly instead of paternal, he coaxes us to reexamine and rethink. His critical impulse is the antithesis of the Nietzschean firestorm, with its vitalist assertion; his humanity revolves around humility and the logic of the diagonal. Most importantly, though never crassly or obtrusively, the Christian cross, with its suffering and hope, stands as the centerpiece of his symbolism.

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Milosz brings to all intellectual discussion the authority of personal experience, much of it at the crossroads of the twentieth-century agony. Born in Lithuania in 1911, educated in Wilno (now Vilnius) when it was part of Poland, rising star in Polish literary circles in the 1930s, he was then witness to the inconceivable horrors and devastation of World War II, when the totalitarian whirlwind, Nazi and Soviet, settled on Poland. Of all the events that seared his imagination and that of his compatriots, the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 stands out, when a city rose against one foreign tyrant, expecting but not receiving help from the other, only to be reduced to rubble. History, hope, duplicity, evil, nihilism—everything seemed to converge in those Warsaw days from August to October. Milosz survived. Many of his friends did not. After the Soviet occupation, he joined the Polish foreign service, was posted to Paris, then Washington. In 1951 he fled. He lived for the better part of a decade in Paris, and then in 1960 joined the faculty at Berkeley.

His work is autobiographical in the best sense. His reflections derive not from abstract principles but from engagement. Thus the integrity of his commentary is never in doubt. That said, like all great poets he remains elusive, impossible to pin down, even contradictory. Some of the crucial parts of the personal story remain blank. His own life he describes as a "migration away from obdurate divisions and definitions to a harmony with the fluid and undefined." If his own life is a matter of "de-definition," who, then, is Czeslaw Milosz?

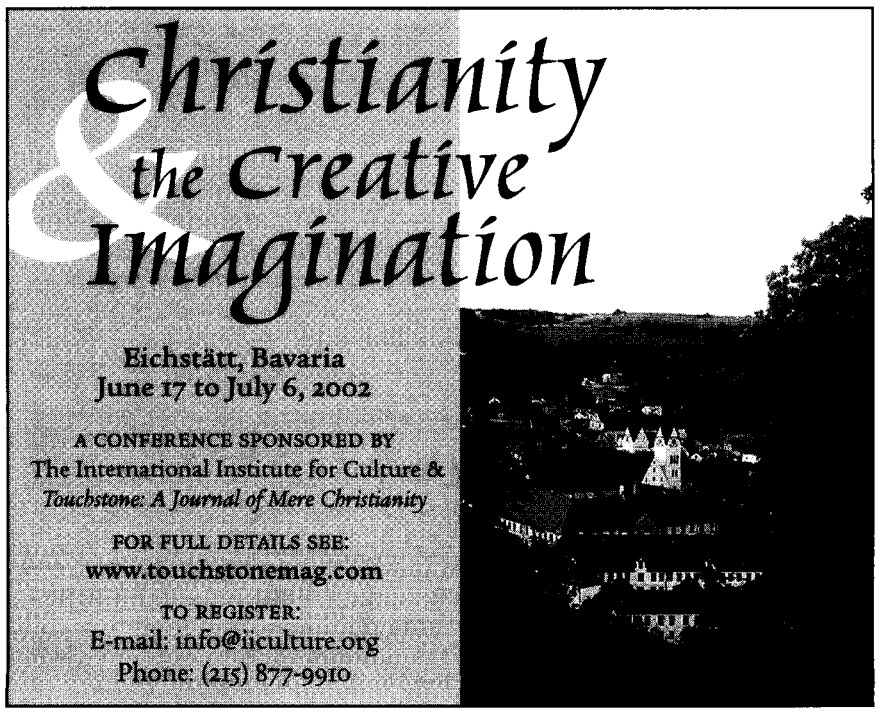
Movement has been the essence of his experience. Movement remains the leitmotif of his intellectual quest. Transience, however, is hard to celebrate. Permanent motion is more likely to evoke pleading than plaudits, imprecision instead of focus. Milosz's defection is from the tyranny of a rationalism where history has a fixed and purposeful meaning. William Blake despised Isaac Newton because Newton bowed down to the material world and its mechanistic laws; Milosz bows to William Blake. Clio, muse of history, is a fraud for Milosz, as she was for Schopenhauer, the one philosopher he is prepared to laud. Clio is a false goddess, a creature of arrogance, as well as a temptress. She is an empress without clothes.

Milosz denounces history as ideology; he denounces Marxist determinism and all modern horrors that have been justified by theories of history. His is, however, hardly a denial of the reality of the past. This past in fact overwhelms Milosz and dominates his thought, but any attempt to represent it must remain in the realm of art.

If history as purposeful development is the monstrous fabrication of tiny minds, history viewed as art, as suggestion, is worthy of a lifetime of devotion. In this vision the historian and the poet merge. In the essay "Ruins and Poetry," which was one of the Charles Eliot Norton lectures that he delivered at Harvard in 1981-82, Milosz celebrates the humility of minimalism, poetic microreportage, the beauty of detail. In such reconstruction, no comparisons are necessary, no banal metaphors. History becomes invitation, not lesson.

But how should the poet-historian deal with inexpressible horror? Milosz rejects Theodor Adorno's proposition that after Auschwitz art is impossible. He cites the example of Anna Swirszczynska (1909-1984), who lived through the war in Warsaw, took part in the Uprising, survived and then tried to write about the experience. Only thirty years later did she come up with a mode of expression that half satisfied her, a poetry of less, without meter or rhyme, that produces miniature snapshots of incidents or scenes, "a most humble art of mimesis," as Milosz admiringly describes it. Following her example, we should construct poetry (read history) out of the "remnants found in ruins."

But what is the point? Why bother? Evil, insists Milosz, is the one undeniable constant in the human drama. "Horror is the law of the world of living creatures, and civilization is concerned with masking that truth," he



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writes in a brief, chilling essay entitled "Anus Mundi." If art, literature, and historical writing were truthful, no one would be able to tolerate them. What, then, is the role of the artist in the modern world?

Here Milosz is disposed to a tragic fatalism. You must plant the fruit tree, he insists, regardless of the likelihood of disaster tomorrow or the day after. Among the many definitions of communism, the most apt, he says, is "enemy of orchards." Poetry and history rise from ruins, always, and from the seeds of fruit trees. In humility, in doubt, not in certainty, is to be found faith. Milosz would like to believe completely, wholly, but he remains suspicious of all inclinations, except that of doubt. I doubt, therefore I am.

It is in fact this very doubt—bordering at times on despair—that convinces him that there is more to life than the here and now. It is not history as meaning, or experience as exhilaration; it is rather the quanta of human goodness, pulsing ever in the midst of darkness, that elevate existence to transcendence, and that provide a suggestion of ultimate resolution. Milosz is fond of Albert Camus, the existential unbeliever, whom he celebrates in the end as a true believer. Camus rejected God out of love, insists Milosz, unable, as a mortal and fallible being, to find appropriate justification for God.

Along with history, art, and faith, the theme of exile, from the orchard grove, is a constant in these essays. Milosz was born in Lithuania when it was a Russian province. He was educated in Wilno when, between 1920 and 1939, it was a part of Poland. He has now lived in America for almost half his life. Where is his homeland? What is his language? Where is his audience?

If language is a problem for all poets, Milosz shoulders multiple burdens. He is a man of the word, and yet he is riven by Kafkaesque doubt about language as a dishonest fabrication. His return to his birthplace after a half century was like closing the circle, he says. He, the poet, was reduced to silence, unable to articulate his emotion. For the inaugural item in this collection and the inspiration for the volume's title, the editors have wisely chosen a short piece from the late 1960s that starts with the words: "I am here. Those three words contain all that can be said—you begin with those words and you return to them."

WHO, THEN, IS Czeslaw Milosz? He refuses to explicate identity or faith. "I understand nothing," he cries out at one point. Yet his very existence, as a conscience-stricken survivor, provides succor. In his rejection of extremes, in his pervasive doubt, anxiety, and guilt, but also in the affirmation that is a counterpart to conscience, and of course in his consummate poetic artistry, he is one of the great moral intellectuals of the last century. Incandescent but also evanescent, he is a personal manifestation of those irrepressible moments of goodness that revivify humanity and allow us to continue.

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BRIEFLY NOTED

THE 1917 PIO-BENEDICTINE CODE OF CANON LAW. English translation and scholarly apparatus by EDWARD N. PETERS. *Ignatius. 813 pp. $49.95.*

Pope Pius X (1903-14) put into the hands of Pietro Cardinal Gasparri the task of organizing a single code of canon law. The 1917 Code of Canon Law was a groundbreaking work of legal art, for it distilled and organized some fifteen hundred years of canonical materials into 2,414 canons. It governed the Church for sixty-five years until it was replaced by the revised Code, promulgated in 1983 by Pope John Paul II. But the new Code requires attention to the older for understanding and applying the law. Along with the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the 1917 Code is an essential point of reference. This edition by Edward N. Peters is the first English translation of the 1917 Code. The translation is clean and

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sturdy. Most usefully, under each canon Peters provides cross-references to the new Code—which allows the reader to trace official developments of individual canons—as well as relevant secondary works and dissertations in English. This edition also includes the magisterial Preface by Cardinal Gasparri, which itself is worth the price of the book.

— *Russell Hittinger*

THE STRANGER FROM PARADISE: A BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM BLAKE. By G. E. BENTLEY, JR. *Yale University Press. 532 pp. $39.95.*

As to whether William Blake was crazy, Bentley, who is Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Toronto and has devoted his life to the study of Blake, makes a convincing case that we should keep an open mind. That he was a poet, painter, engraver, and visionary of genius is beyond doubt. For Blake, the most real world is the world of the imagination, and his imagination was wild. Religiously, he was a dissenter and an Enthusiast with a capital E who was in constant commerce with angels and hardly encountered a heresy—Manichean, Swedenborgian, Muggletonian, and sundry pantheisms—in which he did not find something to admire, although toward the very end of his life there was, perhaps, a turn toward an approximation of Christian orthodoxy. (He asked for a Church of England funeral.) His wife Catherine once remarked, "I have very little of Mr. Blake's company. He is always in Paradise." In fact, it is a merit of Bentley's biography that it underscores the warmth and productivity of the Blakes' marital companionship. That it is possible, if but partially, to live in paradise now was the core conviction of the one who wrote in "Auguries of Innocence":

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour

The Stranger from Paradise is a splendid account and a fitting capstone to Bentley's lifetime of Blake scholarship. He is rigorously self-denying in refusing to impose his interpretations, being content, as he puts it, to let "the unmediated evidence for Blake's life speak for itself." The many fine colored plates and other illustrations add to the attractiveness of a book well worth the hours of reading, at the risk of being infected by Blake's strange, and possibly inspired, madness.

TRUSTING THE SPIRIT: RENEWAL AND REFORM IN AMERICAN RELIGION. By RICHARD CIMINO. *Jossey-Bass. 214 pp. $24.95.*

"American religion" is so vast and various that a book such as this can only dip into it and try to come up with representative samples. Cimino is judicious in his selections and fair-minded in his judgments. He examines the Catholic charismatic renewal, which is strong but, he suggests, a little too tame in its obedience to church authority; the Biblical Witness Fellowship, which tried to return the United Church of Christ to historic teaching and practice, but is now moving into a "post-denominational" mode; the "evangelical catholic" movement among Lutherans, contending for what they believe was the intent of the Reformation, while the Lutheran bodies have drifted into becoming permanently separated Protestant denominations; Taizé, an ecumenical monastic movement in France that has become a moveable feast of youthful enthusiasms also in this country, but has largely lost the ecumenical direction of the founders; sundry "spiritualities" in contemporary Judaism growing out of the *havurah* movement of the 1960s; and Call to Action, an organization of progressive and aging Catholics who are angrily, and sometimes happily, alienated from what they view as the "institutional church." *Trusting the Spirit* is an interesting read and provides insight into movements that claim the allegiance of people who are, usually, admirable in their devotion. All these initiatives are marginal, however, and there would seem to be slight prospect of their being significant forces of "renewal and reform" in the communities they seek to change. Moreover, Cimino tends to view diversity, contention, agitation, and innovation as signs of religious vitality, even suggesting at one point that they might succeed in producing new religions. That, of course, is precisely the opposite of what some movements, such as the Biblical Witness Fellowship and the evangelical catholics in Lutheranism, intend. Nonetheless, this is a book that students of religion in America should not ignore.

LOVE AND RESPONSIBILITY. By POPE JOHN PAUL II. A simplified version by Monsignor Vincent M. Walsh, J.C.D. *Key of David Publications. 136 pp. $10.*

Love and Responsibility, written in the late 1950s by a then-obscure Polish academic named Karol Wojtyla, was the product of an intriguing intellectual collaboration between a priest-philosopher and his students, who were often his penitents as well. The book's analysis of the ethics of sexual love would later provide the philosophical foundation for Pope John Paul II's "theology of the body," which has drawn increasing attention as a powerful Christian counterproposal to the claims of the sexual revolution. *Love and Responsibility* is not, however, an easy read; Monsignor Vincent Walsh has done a service by providing this "simplified version," an outline of the argument of *Love and Responsibility* written in language that nonspecialists can engage.

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THE BROKEN HEARTH: REVERSING THE MORAL COLLAPSE OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY. By WILLIAM J. BENNETT. *Doubleday. 199 pp. $22.95.*

William Bennett, champion of the virtues, here turns his attention to the pressing problem of family breakdown. Although recent trends indicate that the collapse of the American family may have begun to reverse itself (see David Blankenhorn, "The Reappearing Nuclear Family," FT, January), there can never be too many books defending an institution still under assault from so many quarters. And when the book is written by someone as thoughtful and morally serious as Bennett, it promises to make an important contribution to debate in the public square. The author delivers on this promise in chapters devoted to cohabitation, illegitimacy, fatherlessness, homosexual unions, and divorce. One by one, Bennett examines and responds to the arguments of those who defend—as well as those who refuse to oppose—alternatives to the traditional two-parent family. Not only is the family good for children, but it is, he argues, intrinsically good, embodying "deep human truths." While we may lament the fact that circumstances have rendered it necessary to defend what was once thought to be obvious, we should be grateful for books that make the case as powerfully as this one.

DECADE OF DENIAL: A SNAPSHOT OF AMERICA IN THE 1990S. By HERBERT LONDON. *Lexington. 208 pp. $24.95 paper.*

After September 11, there are signs that the frivolousness of the 1990s may be coming to an end. Herbert London, President of the Hudson Institute and Professor of Humanities at New York University, does a splendid job of ensuring that the memory of that decade remains fresh in our minds. In a series of lively chapters on Hollywood, TV, sports, higher education, and various other aspects of popular culture, London traces the vulgarity that reigned in so many of our leading cultural and political institutions over the past ten years to the rebelliousness and political utopianism of the baby boomers, who have done so much to debase the culture since the 1960s. But London is right to admit in his Epilogue that his book consists more of "musings over a couple of hundred pages" than a sustained argument. He intends merely to catalogue our vices and, perhaps, provoke us to future virtue. It is a good intention well executed.

UGLY AS SIN. By MICHAEL S. ROSE. *Sophia. 163 pp. $24.95.*

The subtitle is "Why They Changed Our Churches from Sacred Places to Meeting Spaces—and How We Can Change Them Back Again." *Ugly as Sin* is a spirited and sometimes over-the-top addition to the growing "ain't it awful" literature on what happened to church architecture over the last half century. But it is more than that, and the belligerently slangy title and subtitle do a disservice to that more. Rose offers a helpful overview of the history of Christian architecture and intelligently sets out the core intuitions that made such architecture Christian, and, more specifically, Catholic. "An authentic Catholic church building is a work of art that acknowledges the previous greatness of the Church's architectural patrimony: it refers to the past, serves the present, and informs the future," he writes. Also in Christian architecture, the winds are blowing in a different and more promising direction. Along with others, such as fine work being done at the University of Notre Dame, Rose's book makes the promise more palpable.

FULL OF GRACE: AN ORAL BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN CARDINAL O'CONNOR. Edited by TERRY GOLWAY. *Pocket Books. 237 pp. $22.*

Personal testimonies from numerous friends, family members, colleagues, public figures, and strangers whose lives he touched, highlighting the many dimensions of the late Cardinal's personal and priestly life. Despite repetitions and cloying moments, the book offers a moving portrayal of a man of seemingly inexhaustible energy who, with all his public duties, took time to reach out to ordinary people with random acts of kindness. Golway is perhaps too eager to "balance" the perception of O'Connor's vibrant orthodoxy, for which he was "controversial," with evidence of his liberal propensities, notably with respect to labor unions, but *Full of Grace* is nonetheless a compelling sketch of a caring and courageous leader who is sorely missed.

THE BEST CHRISTIAN WRITING 2001. Edited by JOHN WILSON. *HarperSanFrancisco. 339 pp. $15 paper.*

This is the second annual collection edited by Mr. Wilson, and it is splendid. We would say that even if pieces appearing in these pages were not generously represented. Maybe Mr. Wilson is just tapping into something that has been there all along, but this book and its predecessor stimulate the suspicion that something new and welcome is happening in Christian intellectual and literary circles. The pieces collected here manifest confidence, grace, and a sense of joy in exploring the ways in which "the Christian thing" illumines everything.

COLORING THE NEWS. By WILLIAM MCGOWAN. *Encounter. 278 pp. $25.95.*

Complaining about media bias strikes some as an instance of beating

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a dead horse. Is there anything new to be said? William McGowan, a veteran reporter, answers in the affirmative. The bias of editors and executives has been amply documented over the years, but not much attention has been paid the bias resulting from the quest for "diversity" in the newsrooms of the nation. The author's prime exhibit is the *New York Times*, but he makes a convincing case that all over the country partisans of special causes—racial, sexual, ideological—exercise what amounts to veto power over stories or features that might offend their "constituencies." The result, predictably, is less diversity in news reporting. McGowan tells a dreary tale, amply supported by the drearily narrow version of reality printed and broadcast every day as "the news."

THE ANXIOUS BENCH, ANTICHRIST, AND THE SERMON CATHOLIC UNITY. By JOHN WILLIAMSON NEVIN. Edited by AUGUSTINE THOMPSON, O.P. *Wipf and Stock. 177 pp. $18.*

THE MYSTICAL PRESENCE. By JOHN WILLIAMSON NEVIN. Edited by AUGUSTINE THOMPSON, O.P. *Wipf and Stock. 244 pp. $22.*

"The Mercersburg theology" was an influential movement in the second half of the nineteenth century that sought to advance Christian unity through an "evangelical catholic" interpretation of Protestantism, and of Calvinism in particular. Nevin was its chief proponent. *The Mystical Presence* is a catholic defense of the Calvinist doctrine of the Eucharist, and *The Anxious Bench* includes also *Antichrist* and the sermon, "Catholic Unity." Both volumes are edited by a Dominican priest and are valuable in understanding an important part of Christian thought in American history. Nevin was also a most eloquent writer and preacher, and some have compared him with John Henry Newman, albeit without a church that believed what he believed. (The publisher's address is 150 W. Broadway, Eugene, Oregon 97401.)

SPIRITUAL BUT NOT RELIGIOUS. By ROBERT C. FULLER. *Oxford University Press. 202 pp. $25.*

The subtitle is "understanding unchurched America," and the first thing the author wants us to understand is that the unchurched are not always, not even typically, indifferent to religion. But they prefer to call their religion "spirituality" and to express it outside the maddeningly disorganized worlds of "organized religion." A sympathetic overview of religious movements, spiritualities, life philosophies, and other phenomena that have been and will continue to be an important part of life in America.

MAKING GOOD CITIZENS: EDUCATION AND CIVIL SOCIETY. Edited by DIANE RAVITCH and JOSEPH P. VITERITTI. *Yale University Press. 346 pp. $35.*

A useful collection of essays by such as Jean Bethke Elshtain, Nathan Glazer, Charles Glenn, and Robert Putnam on what schools and schooling are supposed to do, and for the most part are not doing, for civil society. The perspective encompasses public, private, charter, voucher, and other forms of education both existing and proposed. With respect to what education can and should be, the different views represented here are an introduction to "the state of the question."

THE CLASH OF ORTHODOXIES: LAW, RELIGION, AND MORALITY IN CRISIS. By ROBERT P. GEORGE. *ISI. 400 pp. $24.95 paper.*

Robert P. George of Princeton University is one of the most incisive legal and moral thinkers working today, as readers of this journal well know. Several of the fifteen essays presented here, including the title essay, appeared in these pages. Others deal with same-sex marriage, moral neutrality, anti-Catholicism, and debates over bioethics. Foreword by John DiIulio, former head of President Bush's Office for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Warmly recommended.

AFTERMATH: THE CLINTON IMPEACHMENT AND THE PRESIDENCY IN THE AGE OF POLITICAL SPECTACLE. Edited by LEONARD V. KAPLAN and BEVERLY I. MORAN. *New York University Press. 370 pp. $65 paper.*

Twenty-three quite disparate takes on the political, legal, moral, and religious significance of the controversies surrounding the impeachment of Bill Clinton. Contributors include Mark V. Tushnet, Stephen Toulmin, Richard John Neuhaus (adapted from an FT article), and David Novak. The moral squalor of the Clinton presidency may, after September 11, seem a world away, but perhaps not. That is the question that will be decided in coming months and years.

WHO COUNT AS PERSONS? HUMAN IDENTITY AND THE ETHICS OF KILLING. By JOHN F. KAVANAUGH, S.J. *Georgetown University Press. 233 pp. $24.95.*

Kavanaugh is a fine writer and thinker who, regrettably, begins from the premise that it is always morally wrong to intentionally kill another. Without exception. He even anticipates an "attack on the infrastructure of New York" by terrorists and argues that it would be wrong to kill them in order to protect innocent citizens. There is more than a little of false moral symmetry here, such as, "After all, would we allow an Iraqi-controlled United Nations to inspect our munitions and bases?" Yet *Who Count as Persons?* is much more than a pacifist tract. It is a convincing argument for

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the intrinsic value of every human life and for the idea of the dignity of the person, severely marred by pacifist abstraction from the frequently sad duties of protecting lives.

CONTROVERSIES: HIGH LEVEL CATHOLIC APOLOGETICS. Edited by KARL KEATING. *Ignatius. 278 pp. $14.95 paper.*

"High level" is the operative phrase here. On the Catholic side are John Henry Newman, Hilaire Belloc, Ronald Knox, Arnold Lunn, and Herbert Thurston, locked in civil argument with sundry non-Catholics on matters of abiding, indeed eternal, importance. The excerpts are judiciously chosen, providing the high pleasure of rereading, or reading for the first time, exemplars of elegance in the tradition of Christian disputation.

WITH ALL YOUR MIND: A CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION. By MICHAEL L. PETERSON. *University of Notre Dame Press. 280 pp. $18.95 paper.*

A thoughtful argument from a broadly ecumenical viewpoint that education does not just happen. Educators, to be effective, must think about what they are doing, and that thinking may result in something like a philosophy of education.

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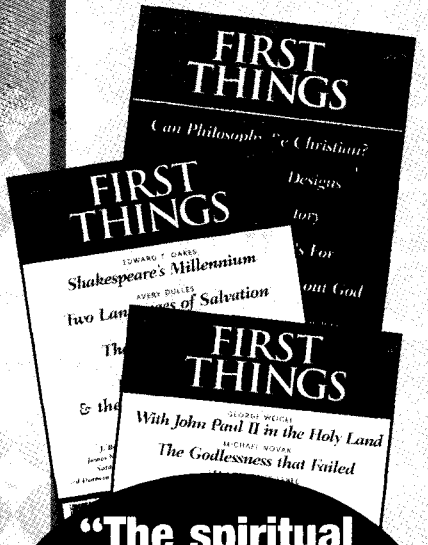

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

A Curious Encounter with a Philosopher from Nowhere

One could hardly imagine a more civilized setting. A crisply sunny November afternoon at Colgate University, its campus of handsome nineteenth-century buildings tucked into the cadenced hills of upstate New York, all covered with the last fine glow of autumn foliage. The four hundred bright-eyed students, along with faculty and townsfolk, filled the auditorium, with many standing and sitting in the aisles. The great attraction, I was well aware, was Peter Singer. "The controversial Peter Singer," as he is routinely called, holder of a chair in bioethics at Princeton's University Center for Human Values. He and I were to debate the question, "Who Should Live and Who Should Die?" It was a standard format, with opening statements and rebuttals, followed by another hour of responding to questions from the audience. Don't ask me who won. As is usual with public debates, partisans on both sides claim victory and are reinforced in what they believed before. I don't think I did too poorly, but Singer, his forensic talents honed by the assumption that his views will meet with resistance, is an impressive performer.

I had not met Professor Singer before, although I had of course read a good bit of his work. After all, the *New Yorker* declares him to be the world's "most influential living philosopher," and even in the guild of professional philosophers there are some who agree with that estimate. In addition to the two hours of public exchange, we spent several hours in conversation, and I confess that there is much about him that one cannot help but like. He is a bright, articulate, and very personable bloke, as they might say in his native Australia. He does not mind at all being called a gadfly; on the contrary, he obviously relishes the role. He would like to think that he is also something more than a gadfly, but for him philosophy is clearly not defined, as the classical authors would have it, by the love of wisdom but by, as he is prone to putting it, getting people to think for themselves.

The opening line of *Rethinking Life and Death* sets forth what for him is self-evidently the case: "After ruling our thoughts and our decisions about life and death for nearly two thousand years, the traditional Western ethic has collapsed." That is the presupposition, variously phrased, that runs throughout his argument. And there is another, from the same text: "The views I put forward should be judged not by the extent to which they clash with accepted moral views but on the basis of the arguments by which they are defended." Although he does not put it so baldly, he seems to believe that the fact that his argument clashes with accepted moral views is evidence of its superiority. One would expect no less of a gadfly.

His system of ethics, which he tends to assume is ethics tout court, is an individual preference version of utilitarianism, going back to the nineteenth century and Jeremy Bentham's doctrine that each is to count as one and none is to count as more than one. The ethical goal is to minimize pain and maximize pleasure. Among the many traditions of ethical thought, this one, for Peter Singer, not only counts as more than one but is the only one. Utility, equality, universality, and individual choice—these are the dogmatic points of reference in a scheme presented as the enemy of dogma. This is pretty conventional stuff in some circles of academic philosophy, but in the utilitarian tradition Prof. Singer has gained fame and notoriety by drawing from it some unusual conclusions, or at least by

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promoting his conclusions with unusual candor. He also wants to believe that he is not rigidly tied to any system, utilitarian or otherwise. At times he declares that the lodestar of his thinking is one simple imperative: reduce suffering.

Singer has been widely quoted as saying that he and the Pope are the only ones who understand what the abortion debate is about. He says he does not remember saying that, but he allows that he well might have. I pointed out in the debate that, in his role as gadfly, Prof. Singer renders the very useful service of making clear that the logic supporting the unlimited abortion license imposed by the Supreme Court in 1973's *Roe v. Wade* decision necessarily extends to infanticide, euthanasia, eugenics, and other measures that he espouses, and for which many who support that license wrongly criticize him as an extremist. Peter Singer, with his scheme of individual preference utilitarianism, has simply thought the matter through more consistently than most supporters of the pro-choice position, which is a position of—although such people may never have heard the phrase before—individual preference utilitarianism.

Rights, Animal and Human

In our opposing positions, we were fairly pitted against one another. I defended the proposition that civilization is marked by an expansive definition of the human community for which we accept common responsibility, which requires, in turn, the uncompromisable rule that it is always and in every instance wrong intentionally to kill an innocent human being. Prof. Singer defended the proposition that the ethical goal is to reduce suffering and respect preferences, and that goal may at times permit and even require the killing of the innocent. At many times, as it turns out. To be sure, his argument has important qualifications. Not all who are biologically human beings should be counted as human beings. Some human beings are more human than others. The unborn, the newborn, the anencephalic, and those in a vegetative state, for instance, do not count, or at least do not count fully, as human beings. The other qualifying prong of his argument is that it is not rational to draw a hard and fast line between human beings and other forms of animal life. To do so is an instance of "speciesism."

Prof. Singer's book on animal liberation has sold hundreds of thousands of copies, and in law schools today there are scholars developing a legal framework for the defense of animal rights based on his work. (In deference to Singer, the dinner at the president's house was vegetarian and, I must admit, very tasty.) The natural result of Singer's argument is to shrink the circle of those protected by virtue of human rights, and to expand the circle of beings protected by rights deemed to be superior to the rights of some human beings. The argumentative strategy requires, of course, the blurring of the line between human animals and other animals. Many commentators expressed shock when, in the past year, Prof. Singer came out in defense of sexual relations between human beings and animals, a practice traditionally known as bestiality. (He qualified his argument by emphasizing that it is not permissible to cause the animal pain.) Clearly, the commentators who were shocked had not been attending to his argument. It follows. Yet I admit that I am still puzzled about why, in the absence of clear consent on the animal's part, such intercourse is not a form of rape. But we had so many things to discuss, and perhaps on some other occasion Prof. Singer can set me straight on that one.

We can all agree that contemporary medical technology presents some new circumstances in making life-and-death decisions, although some of us think they are not so new as the Singers of the world claim is the case. In the debate, I began with the rule that we are always to care and never to kill, and then considered "hard cases" in the light of that rule. Prof. Singer, as you might expect, began at the other end with the hard cases (the anencephalic infant being his prime example), which, he contended, discredit the rule. Of course he agrees that we are always to care; it is only that sometimes caring means killing. He does not object to my saying that he is a proponent of the kindness that kills. In his view, what matters is the kindness.

That is one reason why he resents so deeply the German universities that have denied him a platform. The Germans claim that his argument is reminiscent of, if not identical with, the Nazis and their doctrine of "life unworthy of life." In his writings, Singer has protested vigorously that it is the German students who shout him down who are the real Nazis. I pointed out in response that, while it is true that the Nazis denied free speech, it is not for that that they are chiefly remembered. After the Holocaust and other atrocities of the Nazi era, the sanctity of human life was entrenched in the basic law of Germany, and Singer is very explicit about his goal of overthrowing the idea of the sanctity of human life, which he depicts as a discredited Christian imposition on clear thinking. Some Germans claim he is a Himmler in academic tweeds. Of course he is not a Himmler. He had grandparents killed in the Holocaust. Moreover, he is an intellectual and a gentleman, and his purpose is to reduce suffering.

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A Spot of Unpleasantness

There was a spot of unpleasantness in the debate. Singer's Benthamite principle that each counts as one and none as more than one has led him to insist again and again that, from an ethical viewpoint, our duties to friends and family are not different from our duties to strangers. That is part of what it means when he says his ethical theory is universal. One has no more ethical duty, for instance, to one's own daughter than to a girl of the same age ten thousand miles away in Bangladesh whom one has never seen and whose name one does not know. My family, my friends, my country—each must give way to the universal. Each person counts as one and no more than one. But then, in a long and generally sympathetic interview in the *New Yorker*, the question came up about Singer's devoting many thousands of dollars and elaborate nursing care for his own mother who had Alzheimer's. In the interview, Singer is reported to have explained, "Perhaps it's more difficult than I thought before, because it is different when it is your mother."

Singer's critics understandably seized on this blatant contradiction. Peter Berkowitz, writing in the *New Republic*, said: "The ethicist's innocence, at this late date in his career, of the most elemental features of his subject matter boggles the mind. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a more stunning rebuke to the well-heeled and well-ensconced academic discipline of practical ethics [Singer's much-used text is titled *Practical Ethics*] than that its most controversial and influential star, at the peak of his discipline, after an Oxford education, after twenty-five years as a university professor, and after the publication of thousands of pages laying down clear-cut rules on life-and-death issues, should reveal, only as the result of a reporter's prodding, and only in the battle with his own elderly mother's suffering, that he has just begun to appreciate that the moral life is complex."

In my opening presentation, I suggested that Singer's claim to "neutrality," to representing the rationality of "the disinterested observer," was a kind of "view from Nowhere," and I pointed out that nobody actually lives in Nowhere. In this connection, I referred to the public discussion of Singer's very preferential treatment of his mother. I said he was to be commended for what he did, but that it is a cockeyed ethical theory that is embarrassed by a son's caring for his elderly mother. Prof. Singer very sharply, one might say rudely, interrupted my presentation, protesting that I was invading his privacy, that his mother had recently died, and that the *New Yorker* article misrepresented his views. I was quite taken aback and apologized for any offense given, while noting that I thought he had made the subject a matter of public discussion, and that it did drive to the heart of his rule that none counts for more than one. But his appeal to his privacy and bereavement did score him points, as indicated by applause from much of the audience.

Later, in friendly conversation, I told him that I thought his eruption was more than a little unfair, and asked how the matter had been misrepresented in the *New Yorker* interview. He explained that the extensive care he had provided his mother was not entirely his idea, there were family pressures, and so forth. The striking thing is that he was clearly more interested in defending his curious theory than in defending his commendable care for his mother. In any event, his explanation does not detract from the force of Berkowitz's criticism. After all, it is Peter Singer himself who wrote in *Practical Ethics*, "Ethics is not an ideal system that is noble in theory but no good in practice. The reverse of this is closer to the truth: an ethical judgment that is no good in practice must suffer from a theoretical defect as well, for the whole point of ethical judgment is to guide practice."

Not Christian Altruism

It is not only in relation to his mother, however, that Singer's practice clashes with his theory. His view from Nowhere prescribes a universal and radically egalitarian altruism that is a formula for living a life of unappeasable guilt. He is reported to give away one-fifth of his very considerable income, mainly to organizations feeding the hungry around the world. He readily admits that he could give more, that some children are dying every day because he does not give more. Some writers claim it is an irony that Singer, who so inveighs against the Christian ethic, in fact subscribes to a Christian ethic of unlimited, and impossible, altruism. But, of course, the Christian ethic, in sharp contrast to the view from Nowhere, underscores that we are "situated" creatures with duties framed by specific place and time and possibility. Singer's ethic is a form of "angelism," meaning the human aspiration to an angelic status that is not and cannot be ours. Put differently, the view from Nowhere is a gnostic delusion of liberation from the particular. The Christian view is grounded in the particular, and most particularly in the incarnation of the universal in the child of Mary. And, of course, the "traditional Western ethic" that Singer repudiates also has roots in Greek traditions of virtue that are assiduously attentive to our being creatures of space and time. The vaulting ambitions of Singer's concept of "a morally decent person" are implausible in theory and impossible in practice. He says he is proposing an ethical ideal, but it is, I believe, not an

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ideal but a delusion induced by moral hubris.

He believes that his view from Nowhere is a view from Everywhere, but just as nobody actually lives in Nowhere, so nobody actually lives in Everywhere. In this version of a universal ethic, Nowhere and Everywhere are synonymous. Both result in an ethic for a world that does not exist. The eerie sense of unreality induced by his argument was especially strong when the debate turned to his long-standing claim that it is sometimes permissible, even ethically required, to kill children after they have been born. In the past, Prof. Singer has urged a waiting period of twenty-eight days after birth before deciding whether a baby has rights that we are bound to respect. If the child is severely defective, and if the parents so decide, he or she can be killed. Now, after extensive discussion with medical authorities, he is persuaded that the twenty-eight day limit is arbitrary and too inflexible.

In the question and answer session, an undergraduate sharply challenged Singer, asking why, if Singer's argument is right, his parents could not kill him or have him killed. Singer replied that the rule would not apply to the student because he was a conscious and responsible moral agent, or at least presumably so. This elicited appreciative chuckles from some in the audience. I was less than satisfied with his answer and asked Prof. Singer what, then, should be the cut-off age at which parents would no longer be free to kill their children. One year? "Oh," he said, "I should think it would be somewhat short of one year. But my point is that it's not for me or anyone else to say. It should be up to the parents." He added that it is a decision that parents should make in consultation with their doctor.

Time Out for Reality

Perhaps you have experienced such moments. In the middle of a conversation, a person says something so striking that time seems to stop and an entire scenario unfolds in your mind. That is what happened to me at that point. It went something like this:

> Mike and Elizabeth had one child, three-year-old Elizabeth, and had really hoped for a boy this time, but decided to go ahead with the pregnancy when the tests indicated another girl. They named her Anne, and they loved her very much. Their best friends, Bob and Debby, lived only a few houses away, and they all agreed that such an adorable and happy baby had never before been seen.
>
> It was not until about the seventh month that Elizabeth and Mike noticed the odd twitching in Anne's left leg and arm, and the way she refused to look them in the eye. She spent hours in the corner twirling her little yellow plastic duck, increasingly oblivious to everything and everyone around her. The doctor referred them to a specialist who spoke of a neurological problem and exploratory surgery. Even more troubling were the early signs of autism. They were told that there are wonderful programs now, most of them paid for by the state. With the help of therapists ten hours a day, there was a better than 50-50 chance that at age five or so Anne would be almost like other children. Although the neurological problem might leave her with the odd quirk and apparent vacancy of mind from time to time.
>
> That's when Elizabeth began to think, very tentatively at first, that they should send her back. When she finally got up nerve enough to suggest it to Mike, he was appalled. What do you mean send her back? You mean we should kill her? Not at all, Elizabeth explained, the law is very clear. You just sign some papers saying that you have decided it is the best thing for her, and then they gently put her to sleep. It's the merciful thing to do, Mike. She would have never had a really normal life. (By this time, she was beginning to talk about Anne in the past tense.) Anyway, there is my job to think about. I couldn't have been supervising all that therapy for five years, and you're on the road half the time. And next time we can have the boy that we wanted. Knowing that the burden of caring for Anne would fall unequally on Elizabeth, and loving Elizabeth very much, Mike finally relented.
>
> When she told Debby that they had decided to send Anne back, Debby was horrified. But you can't do that, she said. She's your baby, Elizabeth. You can't kill your own baby. It's one thing to have an abortion, but she's been part of your family, part of your life, for seven months. You can't just kill her. Elizabeth protested that they would not be doing it, that it's done in the hospital, and anyway their doctor agreed with them. The doctor also explained how her body parts could save the lives of other children, so it isn't as though she had lived for nothing. Moreover, Anne wasn't really part of the family. She didn't really relate to anybody, and her autism would probably have gotten worse. It would be cruel to have forced her to live a life that was not worth living. Debby noted the past tense and knew the decision had been made. It was a painful conversation. That night Debby

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and Bob talked for a long time. They agreed they had lost their best friends; they would not be able to have Elizabeth and Mike over any more.

Elizabeth's mother, Mary, told her she would never speak to her again. Grandmothers often are that way. Henry said, Listen, honey, you'll get over it. Anne is their baby, after all, not ours. We have four other grandchildren, and Elizabeth and Mike can have another one who doesn't have all those problems. It's not as though they're doing something criminal. It's legal, and more and more people are doing it. Remember the Schmidt baby, and he was almost two years old. I know how you feel, honey, and I don't like it either, but I don't see how we can impose our judgment on Elizabeth and Mike. It's their baby, after all. And you know she wouldn't have had a happy life. Maybe this is the best thing.

Mary was not convinced; not then, not ever. After a while, she did speak to Elizabeth again, but it was never the same. She remembered how Anne, then less than a month old, had giggled and let out that funny yelp when Father Rittle baptized her, and how they used to recall that, and laugh again. Mary took down from the mantle the Christmas photo of Elizabeth and Mike with little Elizabeth and littler Anne, and put it away in a drawer. Every once in a while, when she was alone, she would open the drawer to look at it, and to remember. She remembered Anne, and she remembered the day that Henry told her that they had sent her back. Elizabeth explained to her father that it wasn't so bad after all. The doctor was waiting for them at the hospital, and there was this really nice room where she and Mike could say their goodbyes, and then a very understanding nurse took Anne from her arms. Don't be embarrassed to cry, she said. Sometimes things just don't work out the way we hoped. Then Elizabeth knew that they had decided to do the right thing. It was with a smile of regret, but mainly of enormous relief, that she watched the nurse carry the poor thing off to another part of the hospital where they put down the babies.

We Have No Right to Say

That was the point at which I returned from my reverie, and it seemed that no time at all had elapsed. Prof. Singer was still talking. He was patiently explaining that people like Father Neuhaus were always worrying about the slippery slope, but what they forget is that most parents love their children and want what is best for them. Most parents would never have any reason to even think about killing their children. So why all the worry? In addition, he wanted it to be clearly understood that he supports the alternative of adoption for defective children, and some parents might be very happy to give up their unwanted child to a couple who would care for it. If such a couple is motivated by a belief in the discredited concept of the sanctity of life, that's their preference and they have a right to believe what they want. Their antiquated belief may help to meet their needs in some odd way.

His chief point was that neither Fr. Neuhaus nor he nor anyone else has a right to tell parents what is best for their own children. Or to tell old people how or when they should die. Although, he added, such decisions should be made with medical advice. He most particularly admires the progressive attitudes and practices of the Netherlands. There euthanasia has been legalized and each year thousands of old people are sent to their final rest, with or without their consent. Ethical progress, he notes, always meets with resistance from alarmists who go on about a supposed slippery slope. But once the step is taken, people get used to it. People are resilient, and it is amazing what they can get used to. The world doesn't come to an end, he observed. The Dutch are still a morally decent people; in his view, more decent since they abandoned outmoded religious inhibitions against doing the rational thing. And so he continued in a tone so reasonable and reassuring. Slippery slope? What slippery slope? Happily sliding downward, he invited the students to follow, and some were obviously asking that most insidious of moral questions, Why not?

As I say, there is much to like about Peter Singer. He has a boyishly mischievous manner, as gadflies often do. To shock conventions is to score points. And there is no doubt that he is very smart. In the course of my presentation I quoted—making clear that I meant no disrespect—Chesterton's line. The problem with a madman, Chesterton wrote, is not that he is not logical; the problem is that he is only logical. Taking no offense, Prof. Singer seemed pleased that I thought him logical, mistakenly equating logical with reasonable. There are glaring contradictions in his argument—notably, but by no means only, with respect to the principle that each counts for one and none for more than one. But one gets the impression that in Singer's view a ready admission of moral guilt covers a multitude of gaps in practice. Nobody said being "a morally decent person" is easy.

And if someone decides not to be a morally decent person? Well, that, too, is his or her choice. We are entitled to take measures to prevent their interfering

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with our choices, but what they do with themselves or with others—especially if it is determined that the "others" are not really human beings after all—is none of our business. Of course, if people act in such a way as to increase, rather than reduce, suffering—if, for instance, they protect and thus prolong painful and "meaningless" lives—we can let them know in no uncertain terms that we think they are not morally decent persons, or at least that they are morally misguided. The principle of equality requires that we respect their right to choose, even if they choose to believe that the sanctity of life means that all are equally deserving of respect, although they also believe that we are not able to, and should not, treat all in the same way. We may hope, in Prof. Singer's view, that with the advancement of education and enlightened thought, they will come to see the error in their position. Meanwhile, he is sure, we do have a right to impose upon them the rule that they must not impose their rule upon us. That is only logical.

"Interesting" Questions

I was, all in all, glad for the debate, and grateful for the friendly discussion of a view from Nowhere. There is a certain charm in playing thought games of "what if," as in what if we human beings were a different kind of creature than we are, in a world very different from the world that is. And what if reality, which Prof. Singer insists is accidental and meaningless, were amenable to the logical working out of whatever premises we prefer. Admittedly, the charm of the game pales somewhat when we remember how the world was when some premises, such as the sanctity of human life, were repudiated.

"The views I put forward should be judged not by the extent to which they clash with accepted moral views but on the basis of the arguments by which they are defended." And we remember how difficult it is to come up with answers that will be recognized as arguments by those who ask, Why not? Yes to the sanctity of human beings, we say, because they are who they are and we are who we are, and everything depends upon our believing that is true. But to our universal and disinterested observer that is a quaint prejudice, at best a personal preference easily explained, and explained away, by cultural conditioning. Ethical progress requires that wisdom received from the experience and teaching of others must give way to conclusions reached by thinking for ourselves, disallowing the possibility that thinking for ourselves may lead us to gratefully embrace the wisdom received from others, and embrace it because we have been convinced that it is true. Ah yes, say the philosophers from Nowhere, but what is truth?

Between these positions it may seem that such a great gap is fixed that we may ask whether there is any purpose in debate or discussion. The answer is yes. Because the interlocutor has faculties of intelligence, will, and conscience that, no matter how disordered, are not beyond the reach of reason, and of grace. Because there is always something to be learned through intellectual engagement, no matter how wrongheaded the arguments proposed. Because such arguments must not be permitted to prevail by default. And because it is important to be reminded from time to time that barbarism, so brutal in its consequences, can appear in kindly mask and speak in tones ever so reassuringly civilized. I say that meaning no offense to Prof. Singer, and I expect that he will not take offense. To a certain kind of mind any question can be "interesting." If it is addressed boldly, with intellectual independence, employing logical arguments untainted by the experience of life as it is lived, and especially if it clashes with "accepted moral views." The next debate: Why not barbarism?

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HUMILITY AND DETERMINATION

Of writing about "the American character" there is no end. And a good thing, too. There is never a time when it is not appropriate to say that the American character is being tested, and in this time of war it is necessary to say it. David Brooks, that insightful taker of the cultural pulse, addresses the subject by going back to look at newspaper clippings, books, and other evidences of the country's mood following the attack on Pearl Harbor, and comparing it with how we are now. He writes: "And yet when you look at today's media and compare them with the media of sixty years ago, it is clear that these days, our Americanness is more of a problem. We worry about being overbearing and causing people in other countries to hate us. It never would have occurred to journalists in 1941 to wonder why the Japanese hated Americans, or to think there could be any merit in their point of view. Today, we fret more and worry that we have been corrupted by affluence or relativism. We are more anxious about ourselves."

Brooks ends on a somewhat doleful note: "This is a reflection of where the emphasis has been in American culture of late. We have become a country disproportionately familiar with our own failures. We

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have developed a hair-trigger sensitivity to the possibility that we may be hubristic. In our uncertainty about ourselves, we respond to disasters with an emotional sensitivity that would have been foreign to our countrymen sixty years ago. It's a weakness unbecoming to a great democratic power as it embarks on a long campaign against an indisputably evil set of foes."

It is always in order to call upon people to shape up and get serious about the tasks at hand, and it seems to me that's pretty much what is happening. Of course there are the incorrigible anti-Americans among us—see Brian Anderson's "The Ineducable Left" in this issue—but they are being daily and deservedly trounced and denounced. The *Weekly Standard*, *National Review*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the Andrew Sullivan website (www.andrewsullivan.com), to cite but a few trouncers and denouncers, are doing a splendid job, and obviously having a jolly time, discrediting the Susan Sontagers who feed the "weakness" that Brooks deplores. Yet "the media" have been, if I may risk a generalization, quite sober and steady since September 11. Of course that's been helped by the seemingly easy success of the American military campaign to date, and almost every day one can sense the *New York Times*' editorials and news columns (the two are not easy to tell apart) eagerly anticipating the first major setback so that they can revert to their accustomed alarums about quagmires, American hubris, and Vietnam redux. That reversion may have happened by the time this sees print, when and if the U.S. takes the war to Iraq, but it hasn't happened yet, and maybe it won't happen at all.

In any event, a measure of humility and "uncertainty about ourselves" is not a bad thing. I'm not so sure as Brooks that it was a good thing that it did not occur to journalists in 1941 to ask why the Japanese hated us, or whether there might be any merit in their point of view. In fact, I expect that many thoughtful people did ask those questions in private, but judged that there was no point in asking them in public since there was no doubt then that the nation was at war. It is not a sign of weakness today that Americans ask why we are hated by radical Muslims, concluding that, whatever the merit in their point of view, their purposes are evil and must be opposed. Reflectiveness need not be the enemy of resolve.

There is another big difference between now and then. Most opinion leaders today, and, I suspect, most Americans have not really internalized the reality of our being at war. Not in the way that their President has. He and our super-efficient military machine are at war on our behalf, but it is not as though *we* are at war. That, it seems to me, is the general mood. And it is not surprising, since we are repeatedly told that *America* is at war but *Americans* should get on with their lives as usual. That mood could change quickly, and the most likely cause of change would be a dramatic and costly setback, or several such setbacks. Then we will see whether the uncertainties, sensitivities, and self-critical habits we have developed since 1941 are, as David Brooks fears, signs of "a weakness unbecoming to a great democratic power."

My hunch is that he is wrong, that when events drive home the fact that *we* are at war, there will be a fierce and politically unstoppable determination to prevail. And it may turn out that a great democratic power is the more powerful when its people know and have faced down the uncertainties that might undermine that determination. We will see who is right and who is wrong, and I expect we will see sooner rather than later.

FT

EXPLAINING THE STRANGE DEATH OF AMERICAN LIBERALISM

Gilbert and Sullivan got it partly right when they had the fellow in *Iolanthe* observe

> *That every boy and every girl,*
> *That's born into the world alive,*
> *Is either a little Liberal,*
> *Or else a little Conservative!*

I don't spend much time writing about the subject, and, in fact, am rather pleased when we produce an entire issue that has not even one appearance of either the L-word or the C-word. It's not that the distinction is unimportant, but it is chattered to death, and one sometimes wonders whether there is anything new to be said about it.

But from time to time something on the stack of review books catches my fancy, in this case H. W. Brands' *The Strange Death of American Liberalism* (Yale University Press, 200 pp., $22.50). Just the thing, I thought, for a short flight to Chicago. And it turns out to be worth a read. Brands is distinguished professor of history at Texas A&M, and author of a biography of Theodore Roosevelt, *T.R.: The Last Romantic*, and another book I discussed at some length in the December issue, *The First American: The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin*. His argument in *Strange Death*

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would, in condensed form, be just the thing to spark a lively debate at a dinner party. The gist of it is that liberalism is not, contrary to what many liberals and conservatives are inclined to think, "the default setting" of American politics. Far from it. Liberalism is a departure from the two hundred year story line of our political life. It is an aberration most recently sustained by the Cold War, which was a liberal project against which liberals turned, thus producing what Brands calls the strange death of liberalism. There is, I think, quite a bit to that way of telling the story. And quite a bit left out. Brands writes:

> Liberalism has had a hundred definitions since the concept surfaced in England in the early nineteenth century; these have ranged from antimonarchical individualism to anticlerical secularism to antitrust progressivism to antinuclear environmentalism, from abolition to prohibition to states' rights to civil rights to human rights. There are economic liberals, social liberals, philosophical liberals; liberal realists, liberal idealists, liberal sentimentalists.

So what, then, does Brands mean by liberalism? "In the context of contemporary American politics, few of either liberals or conservatives would dispute that whatever else it entails, liberalism is premised on a prevailing confidence in the ability of government—preeminently the federal government—to accomplish substantial good on behalf of the American people." We can go with that for the sake of the argument, but, once again, setting aside "whatever else it entails" leaves an awful lot out.

Liberalism, according to Brands, means confidence in "big government," and Americans typically have that confidence only when the matter at hand—preferably understood as a crisis—is national security. In his ramble through history, he illustrates his theme by reference to the Continental Congress and the war against England, when politicians promptly dismantled government power as soon as the goal was achieved. The expansive ambitions of the Populists, under the leadership of William Jennings Bryan, never took hold, and Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson did only a little better with Progressivism. FDR was, by Brands' definition of liberalism, a very timid liberal indeed, and with demagogues like Huey Long and Father Charles Coughlin breathing down his neck, his grander liberal hopes were done in by the (accurate) perception that his effort to pack the Supreme Court was a dangerous power grab. Lincoln and the undoubted crisis of the Civil War had greatly expanded federal power, including the introduction of the first income tax, but that power was subsequently and severely reduced by the Robber Barons in the North and by successful end-runs around the post-war constitutional amendments in the South.

World War II was great for liberalism, says Brands, and he supplies some lovely vignettes in that connection. The collectivist Old Left of the thirties did its best to exploit America's dubious alliances. There was, for instance, this radio jingle to keep the patriotic juices flowing: "Soviet Union hits the spot / Twelve million soldiers that's a lot / Timoshenko and Stalin too / Soviet Union is Red, White, and Blue." Then there was the War Production Board that took over vast sectors of the economy. It decided, for example, that the production of women's girdles would be suspended for the duration, but that face powder, lipstick, and rouge were okay. The WPB ruled that not only did a girl get a lift from a visit to the beauty shop, but "her resultant vivacious spirit, self-confidence, and geniality, being infectious, are transmuted directly to the male members of the family." Now that's big government.

An All-Purpose Liberal Rationale

Truman, however, is the hero of liberalism. With the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the global commitment to support forces fighting communism, the Cold War was underway big time.
Truman, and after him Eisenhower—who Brands thinks was a pretty conventional liberal—expanded government on numerous fronts, from spending on science and education to the national highways program, and all in the name of natural security. Opposing the Communist threat was an all-purpose rationale for liberal advance. There was conservative opposition. Senator Robert Taft, for instance. "In Taft's view the Cold War was a direct outgrowth of the big-government, save-the-world philosophy that had produced the New Deal and American involvement in the recent world war. 'We have quietly adopted a tendency to interfere in the affairs of other nations,' he said at the beginning of 1949, 'to assume that we are a kind of demigod and Santa Claus to solve the problems of the world.'" Apart from Pat Buchanan on the muddled right and anti-globalization activists on the muddled left, such language is little heard today. Eisenhower's decision to run in 1952 was motivated, in significant part, to prevent the nation's return to the "isolationism" represented by Taft, the main contender for the Republican nomination.

John F. Kennedy's short-lived New Frontier fit perfectly the liberal model of exploiting the Cold War for purposes of government expansion. LBJ, however, was singular in promoting massive government

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programs on the domestic front with only slight invocation of the cause of national security. This, writes Brands, was "anomalous" in American history, although "Cold War-inspired trust in government was what allowed Johnson's Great Society to take root." The breathtaking reach of Great Society rhetoric is today largely forgotten. In 1965 LBJ addressed Congress:

> I want to be the President who helped to feed the hungry and to prepare them to be taxpayers instead of tax eaters. I want to be the President who helped the poor to find their own way and who protected the right of every citizen to vote in every election. I want to be the President who helped to end hatred among his fellow men and who promoted love among the people of all races, all regions, and all parties. I want to be the President who helped to end war among the brothers of this earth.

That was the high-water mark of big government liberalism. Then everything began to unravel, with liberals doing the unraveling. The assault on U.S. policy in Vietnam ended up in discrediting the logic of the Cold War, while Watergate undermined the executive branch upon which government expansion depended. Liberal hatred for Nixon (apparently shared by Brands) blinded them to the fact that he was in many ways one of them, as evident in his support for affirmative action and much else. Carter's ineptitude was monumental, including his attempt to replace the Cold War with a foreign policy focused on human rights, which ended in the humiliation of burning helicopters in the failed effort to free hostages in Iran. As for Reagan, Brands has nothing but derision for a likable clown who "tried to have it both ways," but found that Americans, approving of his antigovernment agenda in domestic affairs, would not buy his big government solution for fighting "the evil empire," and so had to resort to, for example, the bribery and deceit of the Iran-Contra scandal. Bill Clinton, in this telling, had no policy but personal ambition, and his announcement that "the era of big government is over" served that policy. From LBJ and 1965, it has been, from a liberal perspective, all downhill. Brands says, first, that it is the fault of liberals, and, second, that they were bucking the main story line of American history.

He concludes: "To the extent anyone infers encouragement from the foregoing chapters, such heartened souls are bound to be conservatives. History would seem to be on their side, and therefore they on its." Americans are steadily, more or less, skeptical of government. Of course he wrote the book before September 11. "If the past was any guide, another serious threat to American security would be required to displace this skepticism. As of the beginning of 2001, such a threat seemed years or decades in the future. . . . Until some other challenge surfaced that caused Americans to put their reliance in Washington as they had during earlier periods of national peril, it was difficult to see how—or why—Americans would alter the attitudes toward government they had developed over two centuries." He then adds, "Of course, in the *presence* of a renewed security threat, the liberals will once again be called to power—Q.E.D." Q.E.D.? It was to be demonstrated, and in part is demonstrated in *The Strange Death*, but it does not seem to be demonstrated by what has happened since September 11—unless greatly increased military spending and expanded domestic security measures are to be counted as a victory for what liberalism has meant by big government.

One Good Point

Brands' thesis about the death of liberalism was worth the read on that flight to Chicago, and is the kind of thing that makes for sprightly dinner conversation among political junkies. I think he's right about the deep strain of American skepticism toward government, and right about the way that liberals inadvertently undermined confidence in government in Vietnam, Watergate, and their sequels. But it is a very constricted view of liberalism that limits its definition to the desire to expand government planning and control. And it is a constricted view of conservatism that is limited to skepticism about government. At one point, Brands calls pro-family politics a "false conservatism." Abortion is not mentioned once in two hundred pages. The culture wars do not make even a cameo appearance.

Yet consider the real-world conservatism that is the base constituency of the Bush Administration. Yes, there is the traditional skepticism toward government, shared by business and old-fashioned civil libertarians. But there is the huge pro-life, pro-family, "traditional values" constituency that cannot be contained within Brands' constricted definitions of liberalism and conservatism. Is "compassionate conservatism," with its stress on government support for the idea of subsidiarity and the use of mediating institutions, liberal or conservative by Brands' definitions? In the real-world politics of our time, liberals have no doubt that it is conservative. So also with parental choice in education, and an assertive foreign policy premised upon "unilateralism" rather than on a consensus of "the international community." In the current war against terrorism, there seems little prospect of liberalism being called back to take charge.

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As suggestive as Brands' thesis is, the distinction between skepticism or trust toward government cannot account for the political conflicts of our time, and I expect it would begin to crumble upon closer examination of other times. It is a distinction that ignores also the judicial usurpation of politics by one branch of government—in the case of abortion, affirmative action, homosexual rights, religious freedom, and much more. And the idea that liberalism as he defines it is dead ignores the continuing dominance of liberalism in the mass media, universities, old-line churches, philanthropies, and elsewhere. I suppose Brands can say that that isn't really liberalism, but the people who promote it call themselves liberals, and define their liberalism in opposition to the above-mentioned marks of contemporary conservatism. At the end of the dinner party, Brands is left with the one good point that, over the last forty years, liberalism defined as confidence in government was, in very large part, undermined by liberals.

And now I will go back to being very glad if we can get out an issue that does not use the L-word or the C-word even once. But not before mentioning once again the "quadrilateral" that I adopted many, many years ago. I said then that I hope always to be religiously orthodox, culturally conservative, politically liberal, and economically pragmatic. The great change over the years has been in the understanding of "politically liberal." And the most decisive turn in that connection was the planting of the pro-abortion flag on the liberal side of our politics, which pitted liberal individualism against the liberalism devoted to expanding the community for which we accept common responsibility. But that's a story for another time. It entails a very different way of explaining "the strange death of liberalism."

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JUST WAR TRUTHS AND FALLACIES

There is, as you might expect, a flood of Christian reflections on war and peace, and few are more informedly reflective than David S. Yeago's "Just War: Reflections from the Lutheran Tradition in a Time of Crisis." Yeago, who is Professor of Systematic Theology at the Lutheran seminary in Columbia, South Carolina, notes that Luther and the Lutheran confessional writings teach unambiguously that it is the duty of government to defend the innocent from attack and to punish the attackers.

Writing in *Pro Ecclesia*, Yeago explains: "This already suggests something about war which is difficult for contemporary minds to comprehend. War, for the just war tradition, is a *moral* enterprise. Our culture, in both its militarist and anti-militarist wings, tends to think of war rather as a fall into a sub-moral realm, a break-out of raw savagery to which no moral rules apply. Militarists think we may from time to time need such a burst of savagery in order to preserve our civilization; anti-militarists think that such savagery is always degrading and never worth its cost. Both agree that war is a moral night in which all cats are gray. Luther and the tradition in which he stands do not deny that war is horrible, or that moral restraints inevitably become dangerously frayed and fragile amidst war's harshness. They nevertheless insist that those who make war are 'servants' of the Judge of all the earth, and even in the extremity of war stand before God's judgment and under His law."

Yeago's reflection, it might be noted, draws as much on the Catholic tradition as the Lutheran, giving particular attention to the work of the Spanish Dominican Francisco de Vitoria (1483-1546). In the tradition that Lutherans and Catholics share it is understood that the government waging just war is not necessarily without faults, even grave faults. Yeago applies that insight to our current situation: "Some opponents of military action seem to deny that the United States has suffered an *injury* sufficient to provide just cause. The United States, it is said, has itself injured and outraged other nations and peoples, and so lacks the moral authority to exact retribution when it is itself injured and outraged in turn. This argument seems to me to be entirely fallacious. The authority of the government to protect the law-abiding and impose penalties on evil-doers is not a *reward* for the government's virtue or good conduct. There is nothing in the scriptural account which suggests that this authority is contingent on merit or desert. The protection of citizens and the execution of penalty on peace-breakers is the commission which *constitutes* government, not a contingent right which it must somehow earn. In the mystery of God's providence, many or indeed most of the individual and institutional bearers of governmental authority are unworthy of it, often flagrantly so, themselves stained with crime. But this does not make it any less the vocation of government to protect the innocent and punish evil-doers. A government which refused to safeguard citizens and exercise judgment on wrong out of a sense of the guilt of past crime would only add the further crime of dereliction of duty to its catalog of offenses. If the United States has oppressed and

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abused other nations and peoples, then we should stop it, and U.S. believers should plead God's mercy for their guilty country. But there is no coherent relationship between acknowledgment of past sin and refusal of present duty."

Reinhold Niebuhr warned against defining temporal conflicts in terms of "the children of light" versus "the children of darkness." In that connection, some Christians have worried out loud about President Bush's moral (moralistic?) depiction of a war against "the evil-doers." But there is, Yeago points out, another argument that should be taken seriously: "While contemporary culture worries that describing our enemies as guilty would lead us to unrestrained savagery against them, in reality this identification places our effort in a moral framework which both limits the scope of our retribution and requires us to distinguish the guilty from the innocent. It is the modern notion of war as a 'necessary evil' rather than an act of just judgment that opens the door to unrestrained violence; for this suggests that war is a sheer expedient in which no moral distinctions apply and in the course of which we are permitted to do 'whatever it takes' to achieve pragmatic ends."

Yeago's article is very long and very thorough, and it is worth getting the Fall 2001 issue of *Pro Ecclesia* to read it in full. He observes that there are still other issues to be addressed, and cites a few of them, including "the distinctive mission of the Christian Church in time of war." One can hardly dispute his somber conclusion: "I fear that the conflict before us will allow ample time for extended reflection on such issues."

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WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ Here are some of the "great women and men of God [who are] the ancient foundation of our faith and our inspiration." The list, in a prayer written for All Saints Day and disseminated on the website of the Worldwide Anglican Communion, includes "Buddha and Muhammad and all the prophets of old. They led God's people to God's light." George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, said the inclusion of Buddha and Muhammad was "very unfortunate." He added, "Although they can be respected, they are not saints who fall within the Christian understanding." Bishop Stephen Sykes, who heads up the Church of England's doctrinal commission, declared himself "amazed." "It is a triumph of good intentions over good theology," he added. The Rev. George Curry, chairman of the evangelical Church Society, said it is "blasphemous," "appalling," and an endorsement of a "false prophet." Canon James Rosenthal, who oversees the website, says he has not heard from Archbishop Carey and the prayer will stay. He notes that it came from an "official source," the Episcopal Church in the U.S., and its aim is to "transform this world for the love of Jesus." But of course.

■ Pastors from a really mega megachurch, Southeast Christian in Louisville, Kentucky, traveled up to Ground Zero to hand out about half a million dollars they collected to help people in need as a consequence of September 11. Out of work? Can't pay the rent for the store? Medical bills coming due? No problem. No investigation. No paperwork needed. Here's a check for $1,000, or $2,500, or maybe even $5,000. "We just want you to know that God loves you, and we do, too." A very unprofessional approach to philanthropy, you might well say. So also, according to this *New York Times* report, says John Keightley, spokesman for Catholic Charities USA. "I would say we have a certain approach to how our agencies respond to disaster and the process of meeting people's needs," he sniffed, "and it's based on professional social work. We're not trying to do something outside our expertise." Unlike those rubes from Kentucky who just go around helping people, in appalling disregard of the expertise required for the professional processing of meeting people's needs. They probably don't even have an advanced degree in charity.

■ "The Pope today called for world peace." That item in the paper, while not wrong, hardly does justice to the World Day of Peace message issued by John Paul II, "No Peace Without Justice, No Justice Without Forgiveness." The message begins with a reflection on September 11, and goes on to address the scourge of terrorism: "When terrorist organizations use their own followers as weapons to be launched against defenseless and unsuspecting people they show clearly the death wish that feeds them. Terrorism springs from hatred, and it generates isolation, mistrust, and closure. Violence is added to violence in a tragic sequence that exasperates successive generations, each one inheriting the hatred which divided those that went before. *Terrorism is built on contempt for human life.* For this reason, not only does it commit intolerable crimes, but because it resorts to terror as a political and military means it is itself *a true crime against humanity. There exists therefore a right to defend oneself against terrorism,* a right which, as always, must be exercised with respect for moral and legal limits in

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the choice of ends and means. The guilty must be correctly identified, since criminal culpability is always personal and cannot be extended to the nation, ethnic group, or religion to which the terrorists may belong. International cooperation in the fight against terrorist activities must also include a courageous and resolute political, diplomatic, and economic commitment to relieving situations of oppression and marginalization which facilitate the designs of terrorists. The recruitment of terrorists in fact is easier in situations where rights are trampled upon and injustices tolerated over a long period of time. Still, it must be firmly stated that the injustices existing in the world can never be used to excuse acts of terrorism, and it should be noted that the victims of the radical breakdown of order which terrorism seeks to achieve include above all the countless millions of men and women who are least well positioned to withstand a collapse of international solidarity—namely, the people of the developing world, who already live on a thin margin of survival and who would be most grievously affected by global economic and political chaos. The terrorist claim to be acting on behalf of the poor is a patent falsehood." The Pope's message underscores St. Augustine's understanding of *tranquillitas ordinis*—peace through right order. Right order requires speaking the truth: "In this whole effort, religious leaders have a weighty responsibility. The various Christian confessions, as well as the world's great religions, need to work together to eliminate the social and cultural causes of terrorism. They can do this by teaching the greatness and dignity of the human person, and by spreading *a clearer sense of the oneness of the human family*. This is a specific area of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and cooperation, a pressing service which religion can offer to world peace. In particular, I am convinced that Jewish, Christian, and Islamic religious leaders must now take the lead in publicly condemning terrorism and in denying terrorists any form of religious or moral legitimacy." The Pope's gathering of the representatives of the world's religions to meet in Assisi on January 24 to pray for peace is dismissed by some as no more than a piece of piously idealistic theater, but it is in fact the most sober realism. One day the current war against terrorism will give way to a new relationship among world civilizations, and especially between Islam and the West. If that deep conflict, now more than a millennium old, is to yield to a more hopeful future, we must recognize that the Pope's initiatives are indispensable. The title of the message has it right: there is no peace without justice, and temporal justice is secured by the acknowledgment of a transcendent judgment that reveals our need to be forgiven and to forgive. This is said without any blurring of the line between good or evil, or any obscuring of the duty to defend the innocent. Rather, it anticipates the day when, beyond the present battles, there may be a new order based on a shared recognition of God's justice and mercy. Some call that idealistic. The right word is prophetic.

■ One may be heartened, or not, by polls showing that the overwhelming majority of Americans back the security measures being imposed by the government. It depends upon whether one reads those polls as reflecting support for the war or indifference to civil liberties. Robert Harris, writing in the *Daily Telegraph*, wants it understood that he supports the war, but he is definitely disheartened. Drawing on the experience of World War II, he says that wars, even wars fought for freedom, are bad for freedoms. "Terrorist wars are, if anything, even more insidious, for there is never any definite victory after which prewar conditions can once again prevail. If proposed new powers of arrest and detention, interception and suppression are pushed through in allied nations, we may take it as absolutely certain that the rights that are being taken away will never be restored." A problem with that is that we have never before been in this kind of war against terrorism. Another problem is that, in fact, after both world wars of the twentieth century, civil rights were not only restored but dramatically expanded. But he does have a good point about what constitutes "definite victory" in this kind of war. We are only a few months into the war, and so far there has been very little, if any, curtailment of the rights of citizens (unless it is a right not to have one's nail clipper confiscated at the airport check-in). In any event, as with David Yeago's assertion above, the conflict before us will likely provide ample time for reflection on, and debate about, such issues.

■ The *Irish Times* reports that, according to a report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Irish students rank second highest in reading and fifth highest in math among thirty-two industrial countries. There is one problem, however. "The OECD sounded a disapproving note, pointing out that education spending in the Republic of Ireland is significantly lower than in many developed states. It suggests that students here are forced to work harder to achieve their grades because of lack of investment." Students succeeding by working harder? Clearly, something must be done.

■ You may recall the item on Professor Patrick Henry's relentless sleuthing to track down that Eisenhower remark on the importance of religion. Prof. Henry is a stickler for details and reminds me

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that on December 22, 1952, it would have been President-*elect* Eisenhower, not President Eisenhower. But of course. (I'm glad I didn't have him grading my college papers.)

■ There are as many apostolates as there are Christians. Richard Bruce of Davis, California, has taken on the responsibility of getting Catholic books and periodicals into libraries and bookstores. You can find out how he does it by checking out www.geocities.com/richleebruce.

■ You know I like *Nicotine Theological Journal* or I wouldn't quote it as often as I do. But then, perhaps from inhaling a good cigar too deeply, the editors lose their equilibrium. There is this unpleasant and just plain dumb little article, "In Praise of the Humble Condom." The authors are disturbed that some Reformed (Calvinist) Christians think having babies is a mark of faithfulness. We live in a "messy" world, they say, and they say that several times. They allow that the Catholic moral tradition "deserves much admiration," but it is, they say, all wrong on contraception. The Pope says that, in conjugal love, openness to new life is related to the mutual gift of self on the part of husband and wife. This view, we are told, "seems to rest more upon emotions than on objective moral argumentation, raising doubts about such claims coming from one with presumably no experience of any sort of conjugal love." One might have thought that the celibacy cheap shot had been retired by all but the likes of Planned Parenthood. The authors are also upset by Christians who oppose contraception because it is God who "makes babies." They invoke the distinction between God's "decretive" will and his "preceptive" will. "The fact that the Holocaust did occur according to the sovereign, inscrutable plan of God does not absolve the perpetrators from their actions." The analogy between the Holocaust and having babies may escape some readers. And yes, the authors admit, God did say to be fruitful and multiply, but "a couple that has produced one child has been fruitful and has multiplied." Well, not quite. A couple is two, and one is not a multiple of two. The article concludes, "Certainly it is an inconvenient fact, but we must be constantly reminded that living in a fallen world is often a messy affair—which may make the infamous condom in some ways an appropriate symbol of the Reformed life." In some very messy ways.

■ I have already mentioned (While We're At It, January) the lovely little book by Sam and Bethany Torode, *Open Embrace: A Protestant Couple Rethinks Contraception* (Eerdmans). At the time, I had not seen the foreword by our J. Budziszewski. (I presume to say "our" because of his frequent and distinguished contributions to these pages.) Jay has this to say about *Open Embrace*: "Another great error of our age is ignoring the design of the procreative power itself. It's true, of course, that even when spouses welcome children, there may be grave reasons to delay conception. But God has taken care of that already. So deeply has he wrought his purposes into us that a woman's body not only bears fruit, but has seasons—spring, summer, fall, and winter, once every cycle of the moon—providing not only for bringing babies forth, but for spacing them. There is no need to thwart the design, to artificially block fertility during a naturally fertile time. One only has to wait for a few days. If that is too difficult for us, something is wrong. It might be asked, 'Whether we hinder or cooperate with the times and seasons of our bodies, what difference does it make? The end is the same, whatever the means.' But God cares not only about our ends but our means; he expects us to honor not only His purposes but His arrangements. Doing so brings unexpected graces, some of which are described in this book. Failure to do so brings unexpected harms, and some of these, too, are described. Speaking of the book, I wish I had read something like it when I was young, and I am glad that it was written by the Torodes. G. K. Chesterton wrote, 'It ought to be the oldest things that are taught to the youngest people.' Sometimes the oldest things must be taught *by* the youngest people, provided that they have learned well from the older ones who taught them. Sam and Bethany have this qualification. They claim no originality, but they have been married long enough to confirm that the oldest things about conjugal love are true, and they are young enough to retain the excitement of the discovery. I cannot imagine better missionaries. From now on, if anyone supposes that ancient wisdom kills youthful romance, I will simply point to them. My generation pioneered in forgetting the oldest things. Perhaps theirs will pioneer in remembering them."

■ Richard Pipes of Harvard has written a little book, *Communism*, in Modern Library's history series, and he packs a world of learning into a brief 175 pages. He concludes with this: "Marx maintained that capitalism suffered from insoluble internal contradictions, which doomed it to destruction. In reality, capitalism, being an empirical system responsive to realities and capable of adjustments, has managed to overcome every one of its crises. Communism, on the other hand, being a rigid doctrine—a pseudoscience converted into a pseudo-religion and embodied in an inflexible political regime—has proven incapable of shedding the misconceptions to which it was

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beholden and gave up the ghost. If it is ever revived, it will be in defiance of history and with the certainty of yet another costly failure. Such action will border on madness, which has been defined as doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results."

■ Back in 1969 Peter Berger published *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, arguing that, when an overarching religio-cultural consensus (the sacred canopy) is shattered by pluralism, the result is bad for religion because its taken-for-granted "plausibility structure" is thrown into question. In the 1990s Rodney Stark and a number of associates started publishing books and articles contending that just the opposite is the case: that pluralism means market competition among religions, leading to religious growth and vitality. These conflicting claims have occasioned a decade of raging, and sometimes raucous, debate among sociologists of religion. Now Mark Chaves (University of Arizona) and Philip Gorski (University of Wisconsin-Madison) have published a comprehensive account of the literature and crosscultural evidence in the *Annual Review of Sociology*. Their conclusion: "Finally, let us state explicitly a conclusion that has been implied several times in the foregoing: the quest for a general law about the relationship between religious pluralism and religious participation should be abandoned. The evidence clearly shows that any such general law, to be accurate, would have to be formulated with so many exceptions and qualifications that its claim to generality or lawfulness would be empty. Rather than an either-or argument about whether religious pluralism is, in general, positively or negatively associated with religious participation, the most valuable future work on this subject is likely to include investigations into the social, cultural, and institutional arrangements that determine, in part, religious pluralism's consequences for religious vitality. This will be the route to a more adequate sociology of religion, one that moves toward a political economy of the religious sphere by placing religious markets in larger cultural and institutional contexts." That strikes me as being just about right. I confess to having a dog in this fight. The economistic or "rational choice" school seems content with religion supplying what sociologist Christian Smith calls the "sacred umbrellas" of individual choice rather than a sacred canopy of social cohesion. That strikes me as settling for sectarianism, which, quite apart from its social consequences, is not true to the Christian understanding of *communio*, as in "the Church." Of course, one readily admits that what is theologically the case is not necessarily supported by the empirical, and therefore very limited, studies of the sociologists.

■ "Expressive association" is a phrase that has gained some currency in legal circles. It played a big part in the Supreme Court's ruling that the Boy Scouts had a constitutional right not to accept men who are openly homosexual as troop leaders. Expressive association means that you have a right to hang out with, and form organizations with, people who share your interests and purposes. The *Minnesota Law Review* has a fine article on the subject, "Expressive Association and Organizational Autonomy," by Steffen N. Johnson, which comes to this conclusion. "I would like to think that part of the reason we protect the freedom of expression is that we recognize our human failings and potential for error—a humility, if you will. Views on homosexuality today are quite different than they were fifty years ago, and the passage of another fifty years may bring yet a different perspective. But the fact that societal views can change so frequently, and so dramatically, suggests that we should be cautious about suppressing views we think are wrongheaded, outmoded, or, as Justice John Paul Stevens suggests, 'atavistic.' A government that allows individuals, rather than the majority, to discover the truth for themselves, to express it as they see fit, and to freely associate with others of like mind is far more consistent with the ideals of the First Amendment than a government that places obstacles in their path." The same issue of the law review has a spirited article by Richard W. Garnett of the University of Notre Dame with the engaging title, "The Story of Henry Adams' Soul: Education and the Expression of Associations." He takes aim at the educational establishment's efforts, backed by state power, to monopolize and standardize what is meant by education. He ends on a moderately hopeful note that the courts are increasingly alert to that danger.

■ David Blankenhorn of the Institute for American Values is of the view that President Bush's admirable initiative is not helped by the tag "faith-based." Is it true that some groups working with those in need are faith-based and others are not? Blankenhorn thinks not: "Most of what we do in life, we do because we believe—we have accepted on faith—what others have told us. If we tried to restrict our activities or (even more) our ideas to those areas untouched by 'faith'—for example, those areas in which we had personally conducted empirically conclusive research—few of us would ever put on a pair of shoes or take a drink of water, much less try out more complex procedures, such as getting married, figuring out right from wrong, or helping to reduce child poverty. Human beings by definition are 'faith-based' creatures. The important question, then, is not whether we believe, but what we believe. If the term 'faith-based,' currently

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so much in vogue, ends up reinforcing the popular but deeply flawed notion that there is a natural split between faith and reason, and that the world is divided between those who have 'faith' in something and those who do not, then it may be time for an emergency meeting of the Conceptual Frameworkers Union. Meanwhile, when it comes to helping at-risk children, if I must choose between a social service agency whose guiding value is the God-given dignity of the human person, and one whose guiding value is the latest proposition coming out of our most prestigious schools of social work, I will choose the former." Blankenhorn notes the widespread anxiety that religious organizations will compromise their integrity by accepting government funds, and the regulation that attends funding. He writes: "In light of this potential danger, and to safeguard the distinctive ways that religious organizations can contribute to the common good, I hope that President Bush's initiative will develop a fundamentally new approach to government funding of religious organizations that provide social services. A friend calls it the 'black box' approach. The religious organizations are the black boxes. Government funding, allocated for secular purposes, can legitimately flow into these black boxes. The government is then responsible for rigorously measuring and evaluating the results that emerge. Are the drug addicts off drugs? Are the drop-outs back in school? Are the fathers supporting and nurturing their children? These are secular questions, to be answered empirically. At the same time, apart from guaranteeing that client participation is voluntary—that is, making sure that clients can choose from a range of programs, nonreligious as well religious—the government is officially disinterested in what goes on inside the black box. If the program inside the box involves jumping, jumping is OK. No messing around with their method, no telling them what their code is. What matters is results. An organization that produces good secular results, be that organization secular or religious, is a good candidate for funding. An organization that does not, is not." What about that is so hard to understand?

■ With scientific authority and literary flair, David Berlinski has earned a reputation as one of the more effective challengers of Darwinist orthodoxies. It is hard, he writes in *Commentary*, to take entirely seriously a theory "in which both rape and altruism are successfully explained as tactics of survival." In *The Blind Watchmaker*, Richard Dawkins wrote that Darwin's theory is profoundly liberating. Berlinski says he, too, would find it liberating, *if* it were true. Yet people worry that skeptics such as Berlinski are flirting with theology. He writes: "The scientific community regards itself as a uniquely self-aware collective, one whose members are prepared, even eager, to subject their most cherished assumptions to a veritable firestorm of critical analysis. Yet the same community warms to the view that general criticisms made of various scientific disciplines, especially when they are severe, are not, in [the words of a critic], 'very helpful.' Not helpful, as in not needed; not needed, as in not wanted. There is plainly a fissure here between two self-conceptions, the one open and confident, the other narrow and defensive. To put it another way: in science, as in politics, large and general principles are often upheld precisely to the extent that they are not believed in. To which I would respond: it is profoundly liberating *if true*. I am as willing as the next man to be liberated; I am simply not persuaded that Darwin's theory is true. Or even plausible. I remain where, I suspect, most of us find ourselves. I regard Darwin's theories *and* various theories of design as inadequate; I have no replacement for either. It is quite true that an appeal to the divine is no longer in fashion. The decline of religious faith is a complex and disturbing topic, but the facts are what they are: sophisticated men and women rejoice in their atheism, prepared to believe in nothing and simultaneously prepared to believe in anything. Those who concur with Richard Dawkins that Darwin has made atheism intellectually respectable have often demonstrated a degree of credulity that would embarrass a seminarian. How else might one explain currently fashionable doctrines of evolutionary psychology, a field so richly preposterous that, in reading its literature, only a man born with a petrified diaphragm, to quote H. L. Mencken, could fail to laugh out loud."

■ I had favorable things to say ("A Different Kind of 'Coming Home,'" Public Square, October 2001) about Ronald Radosh's *Commies: A Journey Through the Old Left, the New Left, and the Leftover Left*. Ruth Wisse reviews the book, with some additional wisdom on what might be called the Jewish connection: "Despite his candid and generous testimony, and his careful attention to the many ironies of his experience, certain ironies still seem to elude Radosh. Chief among them is the way that Jewish families like his managed to create, in their fidelity to communism, a much more sectarian and repressive culture than the allegedly sectarian and repressive one they had abandoned. For the youthful Radosh as for his good friend David Horowitz—who gave a harsher account of his break with the Left in his 1997 autobiography, *Radical Son*—radicalism was an attempt to perpetuate the 'secular religion' of their parents, but this was a religion that had sacrificed every single one of the values that flowed from a concept of human beings

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created in God's image. In the certainty that they were improving on Judaism, the parents wrenched their children from the moorings of a civilization promoting good in favor of a system promoting evil."

■ Throughout the last decade, year by year, abortion rates have been in decline. One reason, Rachel McNair suggests, is that people now know a great deal more about post-abortion trauma. Women are now discouraging their sisters, daughters, and coworkers from taking "the easy way out." Dr. McNair, former president of Feminists for Life, suggests that pro-lifers should be making more of this fact. The declining abortion rates may not produce a "bandwagon effect," but, if effectively communicated, they can alert people to the fact that a turnaround is underway and, not incidentally, pump a bit more hopefulness into the pro-life movement. Dr. McNair writes: "Educating the public about the aftermath of abortion is especially important. Most people who have supported a 'pro-choice' position understood themselves as supporting something that was good for women. When they find out that abortion rates are declining, that better-informed women are choosing abortion less frequently, and that those who have had abortions are now counseling against it and entering into post-abortion healing programs, it will not be difficult or stressful for them to accept this new information and modify their views to a more pro-life position. This approach allows them to maintain their view of themselves as compassionate both before and after they learned this new information. We have come a long way since 1973. For nearly three decades the pro-life movement has tried to argue not only the case against abortion, but also the case for our society's guilt. That most people didn't want to hear this isn't surprising. Today, the situation has changed. Abortion rates are declining. Instead of focusing on guilt, we can focus on hope. If we are mindful now of the task of relieving psychological distress, we will find our task of educating on abortion aftermath to be easier."

■ The pressure on Jewish children not to marry non-Jews, says a liberal Jewish friend, is simply a form of racism, and would be roundly condemned if practiced by any other group. The question, however, is not the formal similarity with other prejudices, but the substantive concern for the survival and flourishing of the Jewish people. Christians can benefit by listening in on how intermarriage is being discussed among Jews. Rabbi Marc Gellman, President of the New York Board of Rabbis and an FT contributor, notes that intermarriage has risen from about 10 percent in the 1960s to over 50 percent today. (Irving Kristol has observed that the problem in America is not that gentiles hate Jews but that they want to marry them.) Only 14 percent of children in intermarriages are raised as Jews. "The truly chilling statistic," Gellman writes, "is that less than 5 percent of the grandchildren of intermarriages are raised as Jews. In other words, in every intermarriage there is a virtual statistical certainty that Judaism will die in that family in one more generation." The causes of this "demographic holocaust," he says, go beyond "myopia, cowardice, and ignorance." There is the great increase in Reform Judaism, which tends to be easygoing about intermarriage and most everything else. "Even Reform rabbis like myself who do not perform intermarriages have benefited from a huge influx of intermarried couples who have nowhere else to go," says Gellman. The timidity of the Reform movement doesn't help either. "Most rabbis are just no match for powerhouse intermarried couples who do not want to hear nuanced reservations based on Jewish law from someone who drives on the Sabbath and eats shrimp." Then there are the rabbis who officiate at the marriage of David and Steven. "Congregations are not going to listen to some self-serving contrivance about how gay marriage is no threat to Jewish values while intermarriage is." So what is to be done? Rabbi Gellman has some ideas about that, most of them having to do with Jewish education and strengthening rabbinical backbones. He ends with this: "Trying to halt intermarriage by guilt or shame will not work. Trying to convince Jews in love with Christians that they need to end their love for the good of the Jewish people will not work. Only a personal faith in Judaism has the power to move an individual to want to share that faith with his or her mate and to make it a priority in their home." About half the children of Jewish-Christian marriages are raised as religiously nothing or as religiously both, the latter often being hard to distinguish from religiously nothing. Christians, too, should recognize that as a very big problem.

■ A reader tells me I am further burdening an already troubled part of our community by pointing out that there is no historical parallel for a leadership of a people actively collaborating in the dramatic reduction of their numbers, as the leaders of black America do by their overwhelming support for abortion. No, I don't think so. The fact is that, were it not for the children killed in abortion over the last thirty years, there would be more than twenty million more blacks in America than there are, with the greatly increased influence, political and otherwise, that comes with such numbers. Hispanics are on the edge of overtaking African Americans as the largest minority group, and one reason is abortion. There are white people in this country who think that, all in all,

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we would be better off if there were fewer black people. Until a few years ago, Planned Parenthood literature boasted of the huge amounts saved in education, welfare, and crime costs because of its "services" to the poor, meaning mainly the abortion of black babies. Many years ago, Jesse Jackson and other blacks used to draw the analogy between abortion and Pharaoh's population policy for the Israelites. Not any more. Today there is hardly a black leader of national prominence who does not uncritically back the unlimited abortion license. I point this out not to further burden black Americans but to note their onerous burden in having a leadership that actively collaborates with those who do not wish them well. The immediate occasion for bringing this up again is that Dayton Right to Life has produced a fine outreach program to African Americans, including some very persuasive literature. For more information, write Peggy Lehner, 211 S. Main St., Suite 830, Dayton, Ohio 45402.

■ We have the word of *catholic eye* that this appeared in a London church bulletin: "The ladies of the church have cast off clothing of every kind and they may be seen in the church basement on Friday."

■ In the old days at Cambridge it was thought vulgar to publish. Dons might go so far as to make a carbon copy or two for purposes of private discussion. But here's a mailing from Cambridge University Press soliciting subscriptions to the *Harvard Theological Review*. It includes titles of recent articles. "The Cults of Isis and Kore at Samaria-Sebaste in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods." "The Semi-Circumcision of Christians according to Bernard Gui, His Sources, and Eliezer of Metz." "Armenian Canon Lists VI—Hebrew Names and Other Attestations." The mailing says the review is "Published *for* the Faculty of Divinity of Harvard University" (emphasis added). Precisely. So what's with this subscription promotion? In deference to an older Cambridge tradition, I declined the offer.

■ In a recent issue we quoted a statement by Mr. Randy Cohen of the *New York Times* that was contained in a private communication to a reader who forwarded it to us (While We're At It, October 2001). We should have obtained Mr. Cohen's permission to quote the statement. Our apologies.

■ I have had some favorable things to say about sociologist Rodney Stark's bold and frequently suggestive *One True God: Historical Consequences of Monotheism* (Princeton University Press), but there are also big problems. Monotheism turns nasty, he argues, when its monopoly is threatened by alien "others." Paul Griffiths of the University of Illinois at Chicago, writing in *Commonweal*, is not entirely persuaded. He writes: "It follows that in order to minimize the use of violence, such conditions ought to be removed. And this is best done, claims Stark, when religious diversity is maximized and no one, or two, monotheisms hold the reins of political power. Under such conditions, civility on the part of monotheists is not only possible but likely, and this without loss of deep conviction. This is an interesting argument to consider in light of September's events. On one reading, those events confirm Stark's analysis. If it is the case that Muslims planned and executed the killings in the name of Islam, then it's likely they did so in part because they felt themselves under threat from the United States as a world-dominating cultural force. But in another way, perhaps, Stark's analysis is called into question by the events. For an element in the perceived threat of U.S. political and social culture is precisely its advocacy of deep religious pluralism and maximal religious diversity. What Stark presents as the condition for the possibility of monotheistic civility may in this case have been (and may continue to be) among the conditions for the possibility of continued violent hostilities. This is not a pleasing prospect." And that is an understatement. Griffiths' further suggestion is that Stark's enthusiasm for everyone else becoming like us pluralistic and ever so tolerant Americans leads to his "drastically underemphasizing the corrosion and privatization of monotheistic commitments caused by the very social conditions that he takes to maximize monotheistic civility." In other words, Muslim rage is powered not least of all by their fear that they might become like us.

■ An Associated Press story reports on a new study that finds that "feminine beauty affects a man's brain at a very primal level, not on some higher, more intellectual plane." Science marches on.

■ Admittedly, it is a delicate question. President Bush is undoubtedly right in not wanting to have the war against terrorism framed as a war between Islam and the Christian West—although sensible people acknowledge, sotto voce, that it is also that. The problem is that Bush—and, more egregiously, the State Department—keep making public statements about how *authentic* Islam is peaceful, nonviolent, supportive of religious freedom, and so forth. A Taliban spokesman is representative of the Muslim reaction to such statements: "I am astonished by President Bush when he claims there is nothing in the Koran that justifies jihad or violence in the name of Islam. Is he some kind of Islamic scholar? Has he ever

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actually read the Koran?" Surely it is enough for U.S. officials to say that we are fighting a war against terrorism, not against Islam; and that some Muslim scholars say terrorism is contrary to Islamic teaching, and we hope they are right. For our political leaders to go much beyond that is to raise questions about their credentials as scholars of comparative religion among non-Muslims, and to make them appear ludicrous to Muslims, who presumably do know something about Islam.

■ We can't control perceptions, but misperceptions may sometimes occasion our asking why. A *Washington Post* story says that criticism of the war on terrorism comes mainly from the right. Then there is this: "In contrast, there has been no antiwar movement of note. Campuses have not erupted with protests, and many on the left who have opposed U.S. intervention in the past have embraced military action against bin Laden and the Taliban. From organized labor to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the military campaign has drawn support from the left." "Why," we hope someone at the USCCB is asking, "are we perceived to be on the left?" As it happens, the bishops in solemn assembly did in November issue a statement, "Living With Faith and Hope After Sept. 11." The language is not inspiring, and it is cluttered with a laundry list of other concerns not to be neglected, but it does unequivocally condemn terrorism and support the U.S. war on the same, touching the usual bases of just war doctrine. (We do hope the statement does not establish a pattern in speaking about the Church as "our community of faith" and "our faith community," or in its urging that we rely on "our faith" rather than on the One in whom we have faith.)

■ Making it in America. Lindsey Vuolo was the nude of the month in *Playboy*, and the issue played up her Jewishness, including a bat mitzvah photo. Rabbi Bradley Hirschfield says on Beliefnet.com that it is a "step forward." "When you go to Yad Vashem and see naked Jewish women who really were thought of as vermin and then you can open up *Playboy* and see a beautiful Jewish body that's actually being fantasized over by millions of men, I absolutely understand this is not the highest level to reach, but it is the next level in our development." As the *Wall Street Journal*, from which we plucked this item, succinctly commented: Oy vey.

■ James Carroll, perpetrator of the risible history of Christian anti-Semitism *Constantine's Sword*, is a columnist for the *Boston Globe*. "This War Is Not Just" is a rehash of the usual arguments, but he adds the complaint that the government used the anthrax scare to justify the war on terrorism. "Now, the operating assumption is that the anthrax cases, unrelated to bin Laden, are domestic crimes, not acts of war. But for a crucial moment, they effectively played the role in this war that the Gulf of Tonkin 'assault' played in the Vietnam War, as sources of a war hysteria that 'united' the nation around a mistake." Apart from the fact that, as of this writing, we don't know whether the anthrax attacks were domestic in origin, the events weeks earlier at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon seemed to have escaped Mr. Carroll's attention. As readers of *Constantine's Sword* have reason to know, Mr. Carroll has problems with making connections.

■ For the record: "An Evening of Readings and Carols," on which I commented in the December issue, is presented on the Princeton campus but is sponsored by the Westminster Choir College of Ryder University, not by Princeton University.

■ Of the hundreds of articles I have published, few, if any, have received such a strong and favorable response as "Born Toward Dying" (FT, February 2000). It has been reprinted in publications around the world and in at least two anthologies, and, even before it was suggested to me by a number of readers, I suspected it might make for an interesting book. *As I Lay Dying: Meditations upon Returning* comes out this month from Basic Books. It is the story of my bout with cancer some years ago, of what I call a near-life experience, of friendship in time of illness, of coming to understand, if just a little, the connections between body and soul when we come to the place where I was, and will be again, and where we all will be. It is a very personal book. It is about the most difficult of subjects, and was a difficult book to write. Yet, upon rereading it now, I am surprised by its sense of serenity. And am reminded again, for I am prone to forgetting, what it means to be grateful. *As I Lay Dying.* I very much hope you will like it, and will tell your friends about it.

■ It is not as though the Christianly specific is forbidden everywhere. The Somerville Theater in Somerville, Massachusetts, presented "Jesus Has Two Mommies." Daniel Gewertz of the *Boston Herald* hailed it as "a lesbian revision of the nativity tale just in time for the Yule season." When asked why a Jewish lesbian is staging a play starring Jesus, Faith Soloway opined that "he's like the icon of the Bible" and that around Christmastime he is "sort of the star." In the play, two women join in a "commitment service," and Ms. Soloway meets Jesus who approves, admitting that he

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had two mommies, Mary and Josephine, who met at a dyke bar called "The Burnin' Bush." Somerville is an upmarket and achingly PC community where one is not likely to meet Christians who would even hint at taking offense. Hey, it's just blasphemy. Can't you take a joke?

■ Here's a feisty article in a journal with the ponderous title *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, published by the American Scientific Affiliation. It is by David Snoke, a physicist at the University of Pittsburgh, and called "In Favor of God-of-the-Gaps Reasoning." "God of the gaps," as you likely know, is a pejorative phrase used to dismiss the argument that, since there are lots of things we don't know, there are still gaps to be filled, and that's where God comes in as the answer. The response to that is that one day scientific knowledge will fill those gaps, and there will be no room for the God answer. Dr. Snoke has a different take on the question. There are two rival theories before us, he says. "One says that the most fundamental ground of the universe is personal, that there is a God. The other says that the ground of the universe is impersonal, that there is no God. Do we not want to judge between these two theories based on their explanatory power? Atheists seem to have no qualms with pointing out 'gaps' in the theistic theory, for example, the apparent failure to explain evil or the silence of God. Why should we not point out the failures of the atheistic theory to explain things such as the apparent design of life and the universe or the nearly universal desire among people to worship something?" He then goes on to explain philosophically what he means by a scientific "explanation" and concludes with this: "Perhaps God has not given us evidence of design in nature, and has made all things to appear as if they arose with no design or fine-tuning. After all, God does not need to give us all the evidence we may want, as we see in the fact that He does not generally speak miraculously to the public, or write 'GOD MADE ME' in English on the side of every cow. Yet I can think of no a priori reason to rule out the possibility that He has put observable fine-tuning into nature, and that if we see such, that we should point out this fact to atheists. As in many theoretical debates, certain data may weaken one theory but lend support to more than one alternative theory. Not only Christianity, but also Deism, Islam, and New Age theories may find support in evidence of design and fine-tuning. That is well and good; other evidence will have to distinguish between these theories. In the scientific world, no one complains if an observation eliminates only one of several theoretical possibilities. Let us therefore happily point out the gaps in atheistic science, while also admitting the gaps in our own explanations if such arise. To paraphrase a trite old saying, 'Better to have predicted and lost than never to have predicted at all.'" In short, nobody has a monopoly on gaps.

■ The quest for the historical Jesus, employing historical-critical methodology, goes back to H. S. Reimarus (1694-1768), which justifies Luke Timothy Johnson's calling the method "classic." He is reviewing John Meier's third big volume under the title *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (Doubleday), and notes that Meier is "deeply, even passionately, committed" to the enterprise of testing the Gospel accounts by criteria that can be agreed to by all disinterested scholars, quite apart from their religious beliefs, if any. When the first volume of *A Marginal Jew* appeared in 1991, I discussed at length some of the problems with this approach, and especially with Meier's effort to protect the Christ in whom he believes as a Christian from the implications of his findings about the Jesus who is the object of his study as a historian (see "Reason Public and Private: The Pannenberg Project," FT, March 1992). The third volume is on the "companions and competitors" of Jesus, and Professor Johnson's complaint is about the sterility of Prof. Meier's erudite probings. He writes, "He dissects the material on 'disciples' and concludes that there were some people who followed Jesus and had that designation. He argues that there was a group among his followers called the Twelve and that Jesus probably sent them on a symbolic tour of Israel. About the individual members of the Twelve, we have real knowledge only of Judas and Peter. Net result? Jesus had companions. Pages to accomplish this result? One hundred seventy of text and 115 of notes." Prof. Meier examines what we know about "competitors," such as the Sadducees, Zealots, and Herodians. Johnson remarks, "The overall results from 190 pages of close analysis in the text and 134 pages of intense discussion in footnotes? That the information about these groups in the Gospels fits intelligibly within all our other historical knowledge about them, and that all our other historical knowledge about the groups does not throw much additional light on what the Gospels say about them." Prof. Johnson's conclusion is withering: "Over the course of these three massive volumes, Meier has made the case that Jesus was a prophetic figure within Judaism who was linked to John the Baptist, who expected God's rule and performed healings as a sign of that rule, who associated with the outcast, who had a more or less definite group of followers, and who interacted with other intentional Jewish groups. Has Meier's method made these aspects of Jesus more historically probable? Yes. Has the yield been worth the effort

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expended by the author or demanded of the reader? Let each one judge." So very much effort to produce so little. As other historians have observed, the truly remarkable thing is that, after three hundred years of historical-critical demolitions and reconstructions, the resulting picture of Jesus and his mission is pretty much what Christians have thought it to be all along.

■ That elegantly erudite curmudgeon John Lukacs says that when most people speak of multiculturalism what they really mean is multicivilization—"the coexistence of altogether different civilizations within the same country." The result is something like post-civilizationism. Lukacs writes: "It is possible to exaggerate the virtues of civilization. It is possible to exaggerate the virtues of Babbitts, but the idea of Babbitt is now at least two generations behind us. Yes, there were too many Babbitts in this country at the time of Sinclair Lewis and Calvin Coolidge. But this was a powerful civilization then, with ample and varied opportunities for the tending of culture, when even the Babbitts, innocents as Sinclair Lewis described them, were made to pay some respect to culture, usually through the insistence of their wives. The yuppies are the grandchildren of the Babbitts, they are not innocent; they are 'culture oriented,' except that theirs is a movie culture. The *New Yorker*, founded during the Babbitt era, was supposed to have proclaimed that its readership would not include old ladies in Dubuque. Well, for some years now the last readers of the old *New Yorker*, the remnant members of civilization, the true American *Kulturträgerinnen*, were, and still are, a few old ladies in places such as Dubuque, while the *New Yorker* has become soft-porn *Vanity Fair*, with a few culture cookies thrown in, but just about devoid of civilization, and with an emphatic presence of what its editor thinks is a tony barbarism. I read that Miss Susan Sontag has appeared in Sarajevo, arranging a performance there of *Waiting for Godot*. What endangers the lives of people there is a breakdown of civilization, not of culture; but that is not my point. I respect the courage of her impulse; but I question the clarity of her purpose. When the Papuans will again practice cannibalism—inspired by what they have seen of it on American television—will their victims be Waiting for Sontag? We face something new in the long history of mankind. One can have culture without civilization. The progressive notion of the great chain of evolution—from primitiveness to civilization to culture—has become laughable."

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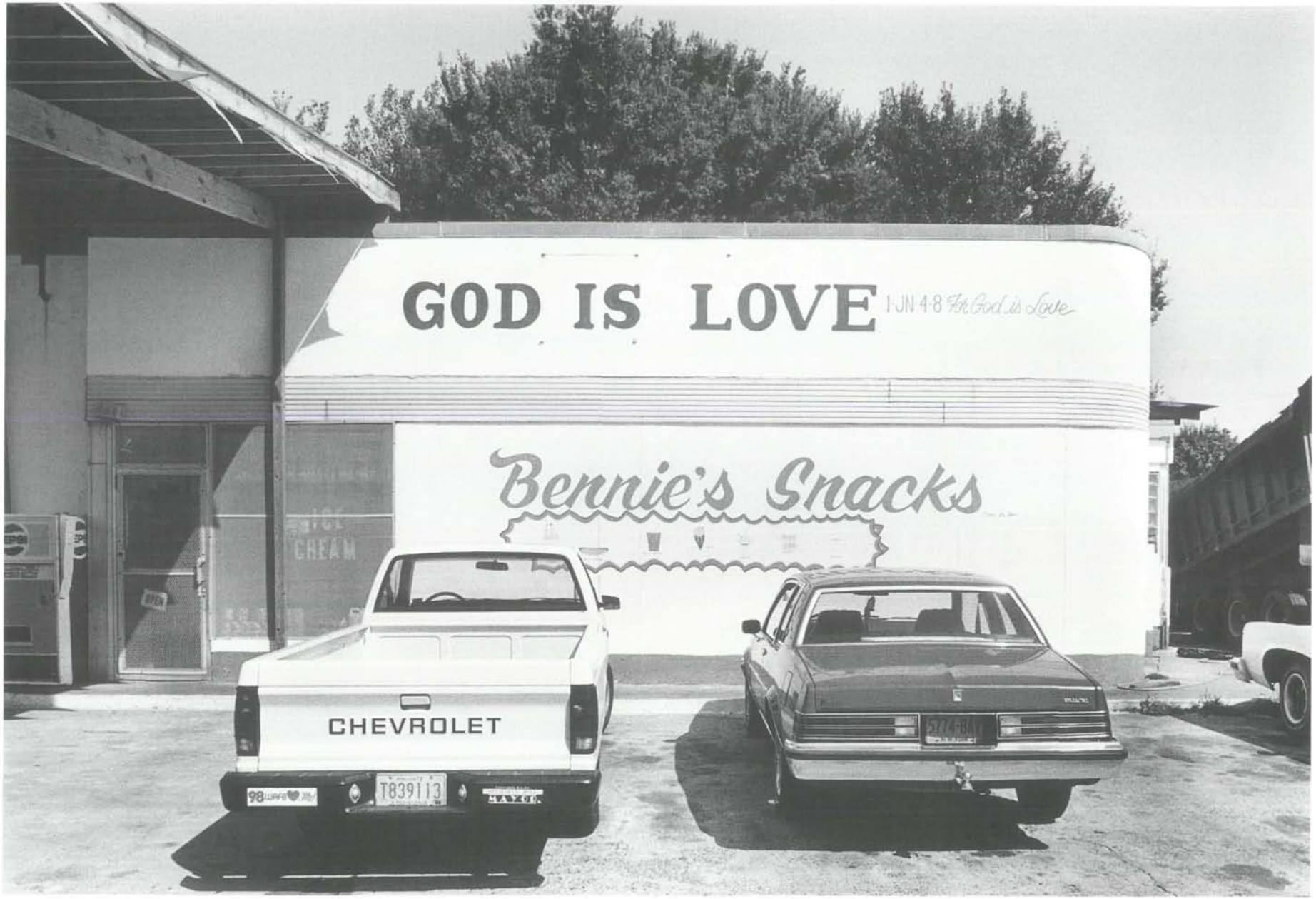

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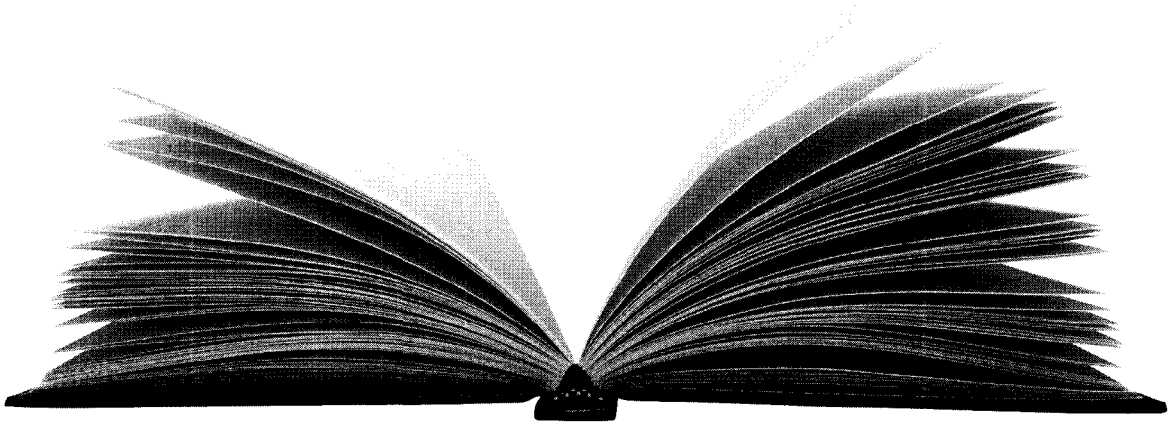

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